

“The Least Possible Fuss and Publicity”:
The Politics of Immigration in Postwar Canada, 1945 - 1963.

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis examines immigration policy in postwar Canada. Its focus is on the changes to immigration policy implemented between 1945 and 1963 by the governments of Mackenzie King, Louis St. Laurent, and John Diefenbaker, and on the events, ideas, and influences that drove those changes. The story is told through extensive primary-source research from the archival records of the federal Immigration Branch, the departments of Citizenship and Immigration, Labour, Agriculture, External Affairs, and the Privy Council Office. The Parliamentary record (Hansard) is also carefully examined, together with contemporary media reporting on immigration issues, the correspondence of politicians and policy-makers, and the statutes and regulations that established immigration laws during the period. Among the topics discussed are: the development of a legislative, regulatory, and administrative framework for immigration policy; the impact of international events on policy decisions; the resistance to immigration reform from within immigration bureaucracy; and the impact of racism and racial ‘preferences’ on policy. Throughout the period, the political considerations presented by these issues remained uppermost in the minds of those responsible for Canada’s immigration policy.

Acknowledgements

Academic research is often a solitary endeavour, but it is seldom undertaken in complete isolation. I have many to thank for their help in the preparation of this thesis.

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My good friends Bill Hamade and Michael Sedra – scholars both – read sections of the manuscript and offered suggestions that were both timely and helpful.

As a young graduate student in the 1980s, I had the opportunity to meet two former ministers of the St. Laurent government, the Hon. Walter E. Harris and the Hon. J.W. (Jack) Pickersgill, as I researched a master's thesis. Our conversations focused on government finance, budgets, and the end of the St. Laurent era. Both gentlemen were forthright and helpful, patiently answering my questions, and I was

greatly impressed by the experience. To my regret, I did not ask them about immigration policy but now, years later, I have enjoyed the opportunity to examine a different area of their political careers. While criticism of either has not come easily, I believe I have treated them both objectively.

My greatest debt by far is to my wife Marion. She read every draft chapter of this thesis, identifying grammatical problems and helping to simplify passages that were convoluted, repetitive, or unclear. She traveled with me on several research trips, ensuring that the time away would be enjoyable and sharing in the excitement of discovering useful archival material. She listened patiently as I formulated arguments, brooded over the conduct of long-ago policy makers, and tried to offer a new perspective into Canada's complicated immigration history. Without her support and constant encouragement this thesis would never have been completed, or even started. It is dedicated to her with love and gratitude.

To Marion

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Introduction

i. Two Speeches

On May 1, 1947 Prime Minister Mackenzie King presented to the House of Commons “in broad outline” the components of his government’s postwar immigration policy.¹ The speech was important, and King had laboured over it. His diary records that on the evening of April 29 King had summoned “P. and G.”² to Laurier House to re-work the draft. “It was much in need of revision,” King complained, and lacking in overall “definiteness.”³

There was irony in the prime minister’s complaint. Now approaching the end of his long tenure, Mackenzie King was never a man inclined toward ‘definite’ pronouncements, even in earlier times, and this speech held true to form. It was nevertheless an important statement, recalled and cited long afterward, and widely acknowledged as the basis for Canada’s immigration policy until the early 1960s.⁴

The prime minister’s speech announced the government’s intention “to foster the growth of the population of Canada by the encouragement of immigration.” Its details described proposed legislative and regulatory revisions, outlined initiatives toward European refugees, and provided carefully crafted assurances affirming Canada’s absolute right to regulate all aspects of immigration on a selective basis and in “such numbers...as can advantageously be absorbed in our national economy.” These components will be examined in the chapters which follow. Significantly, King’s opening words revealed the philosophical premise that characterized his, and his government’s, views on the subject. Immigration, the prime minister declared, was a “problem”, and “like other major problems of the day...must be viewed in the light of the world situation as a whole.”⁵

¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2644-7.

² “P.” was J.W. (Jack) Pickersgill, head of the Prime Minister’s Office since 1945. “G.” was almost certainly Mines and Resources Minister J. Allison Glen, whose department housed the government’s Immigration Branch, although there is little evidence of significant input by Glen into the speech. Pickersgill, however, contributed extensively to its wording; see Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole: A Memoir*, 293-4.

³ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), *Diary of William Lyon Mackenzie King*, April 29, 1947. Implicit in this remark (and typical of King) was the notion that those tasked with drafting the statement had failed to capture the prime minister’s intended message. Elsewhere, Pickersgill recalled that King had continued to refine the speech on the day he delivered it: Pickersgill and Forster, *The Mackenzie King Record: Volume 4, 1947-1948*, 34.

⁴ Files from the St. Laurent PMO contain several earlier draft versions of the statement dated March and April, 1947, suggesting the importance of the issue to the government: LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG 26 L, Vol. 225, File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954*.

⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2644.

King's message to Canadians was twofold. First, he and his government were fully prepared to meet the challenges of this national "problem". Secondly, they were committed to ensuring that no "fundamental alteration in the character of our population" would occur as a result of increased immigration levels.⁶

Almost one year later, on April 5, 1948, Hugh L. Keenleyside delivered a speech on immigration at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Keenleyside was mid-way through a distinguished public service career, most of which was spent in diplomatic and foreign-service roles, but he had been appointed deputy minister of the Department of Mines and Resources in 1947. The federal government's Immigration Branch thus fell within his portfolio.

A former professor of history, Keenleyside began his address with an overview of the history of immigration in Canada, from pre-Christian times to the present. Then, turning to current issues, Keenleyside offered detailed insights into the government's plans for immigration policy, and in so doing went much further than his prime minister had gone a year earlier. It was clear, he noted, that the war had substantially increased the nation's economic potential, creating a "large national capacity"⁷ for immigrants. King had affirmed his intention to permit no change to the nation's demographic "character", but Keenleyside's message was different. Barring another war or unforeseen economic disaster, Canada's economic potential was enormous, but the development of that potential would require very high levels of immigration, and that would assuredly mean changes to the demographic composition of the country. A review of policy changes implemented since the end of the war made this implication clear. (These included a revitalization of the government's immigration service, and extensions to the list of "admissible relatives" of Canadian relatives.⁸) Like King's earlier statement, Keenleyside's speech also provided details about the policy direction the government would pursue in future.

ii. "A Nation of Immigrants"?

Dr. Keenleyside reminded his audience that "Canada is a nation of immigrants."⁹ The phrase is a familiar truism in the multicultural society of twenty-first century Canada, commonly repeated by academics, journalists, and others, and evoking general agreement. While the reaction of Keenleyside's student audience was not recorded, the notion was probably less familiar to them. The Canada they knew in 1948 had been closed to immigration throughout the 1930s and during the Second World War. Few

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2646.

⁷ Keenleyside, "Canadian Immigration Policy", 233. (This article purports to be "for the most part identical" to the speech.)

⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 222.

would have had direct experience with immigration, or viewed themselves either as immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. Instead, most would have self-identified as uniformly British in both heritage and subject-hood, Christian, and white. A challenge therefore confronted politicians and policy-makers: Postwar Canada required immigrants, but most Canadians neither imagined themselves as part of an immigrant tradition, nor identified favourably with others seeking to immigrate. Quite simply, they did not identify with the notion of a “nation of immigrants”. Mackenzie King, who managed to avoid the platitudinous phrase in his 1947 statement, understood that reality, and was determined to navigate cautiously over its dangerous terrain. There were economic, political, and social issues to be considered. Although delivered a year apart, the speeches of both the prime minister and deputy minister must be understood as the outline of a cautious and complex policy initiative, designed to balance the nation’s economic need for immigrants with other factors, including widespread public aversion to immigration.

iii. A Focus on Policy

This dissertation will examine Canadian immigration policy during the years following World War Two. It will endeavour to document the formation, implementation, and administration of immigration policy by a succession of postwar governments, and to position this topic within a broader process during that period of the transformation to a modern Canada. It will also examine the political issues and concerns which shaped immigration policy. Although aspects of immigration history have received scholarly attention, many areas remain unexplored and will comprise the subject matter of this project. These include postwar legislative changes to Canadian immigration law and the creation of a new federal department to administer them, and numerous incremental policy revisions which opened the nation’s doors to new immigrant groups. A focus on policy will illuminate the myriad postwar influences upon the government in this area – domestic and international, from within its own bureaucracy, and from without.

Scholars have generally offered unenthusiastic (and sometimes highly critical) appraisals of postwar immigration policy. Typically, they describe the government’s activities as having been motivated by a “mixture of altruism and self-interest,” clearly inferring that that latter component was predominant.¹⁰ They frequently note the ‘flexibility’ which characterized the administration of immigration policy throughout this period, without examining how such broad discretion came to be.¹¹ Such assessments,

¹⁰ Hillmer and Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire*, 193. The authors are describing Canadian responses to refugee crises in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in 1956 and 1968. See also Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 144-68, which applies the phrase to Canada’s initiative concerning European displaced persons following the war. One general study of refugee policy uses less equitable terminology; see Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?*

¹¹ See, for example, Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 14-6; 225.

however, raise legitimate questions. Are they uniformly accurate and comprehensive? Do they apply to all who were responsible for the formulation and enforcement of postwar immigration policy? Are they fair descriptions of the postwar period, given that some 2.1 million immigrants - many from countries not traditionally viewed as “preferred” sources –entered Canada between 1945 and 1961?¹²

This dissertation will also test scholarly theories about immigration by focusing primarily upon policy changes that were implemented by postwar governments. It will explore the question of whether policy-makers formed and executed a strategic, forward-looking plan for postwar immigration, and whether such a plan – if it existed – strove to lead public opinion or simply to respond to it. The first chapter will review the academic literature on this topic. It will examine not only analyses of the post-1945 period, but will also review scholars’ interpretations from or pertaining to earlier periods, even before the depression and wartime periods, since many earlier analyses influenced policy during the postwar period.

It is unlikely that postwar developments in immigration policy can be understood without consideration of the events, conditions, and approaches that preceded them. The second chapter will therefore explore the evolution of the ‘flexible’ immigration infrastructure described by scholars. It will trace the development of a statutory and administrative framework for immigration policy that was formed during the early twentieth century. Postwar policy-makers inherited an established administrative system from that preceding period, and the evidence suggests that they expected to continue to use it without making dramatic alteration in either policy or procedure. The chapter concludes that the distinguishing characteristic of that system was its almost total independence from parliamentary or legal oversight, and from public scrutiny.

The third chapter will analyse the evidence as to the government’s intended policy direction immediately following the War, during the final years of Mackenzie King’s tenure. As with other chapters, one goal is to determine whether public policy may have preceded public opinion in ways that have not previously been recognized. This study does not pretend to offer an exhaustive analysis of postwar public opinion on the issue of immigration. The examples presented – more anecdotal than scientific – include ministerial correspondence, parliamentary debate, and contemporary newspaper commentary. Public opinion polling was new to postwar Canada and, as the examples cited demonstrate, its results were often imprecise. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that policy makers drew their perceptions about public opinion from the elements of civil discourse, examples of which are examined throughout this work.

¹² Rawlyk, “Canada’s Immigration Policy, 1945-1962”, 288. See also Bothwell, Drummond and English, *Canada Since 1945*, 32. Both sources quote *Canada Year Book* statistics.

Subsequent chapters four through seven will generally follow a chronological format presented by developments during the terms in office of the St. Laurent and Diefenbaker governments, between 1948 and 1963. They will document a process of gradual, incremental change in this policy area, and the issues and influences that drove that process.

Each chapter will examine legislative, regulatory and administrative developments for those periods. An examination of the parliamentary record will comprise an important part of this work, for it was in Parliament that politicians often revealed their true attitudes and ideas about this controversial and highly political topic. Nevertheless, while it is tempting to view each government as a distinct period within this topic, artificial distinctions and categorizations will be avoided. The historical evidence reveals at most two discernible phases to the postwar transformation in Canadian immigration policy, and they do not necessarily correspond to the timelines of successive governments. During the initial postwar period, from 1945 until the early 1950s, changes to immigration policy were undertaken reluctantly, and usually in response to international pressure. Later, particularly from 1955 onward, a series of incremental changes demonstrated increased willingness to open the nation's doors to new immigrant groups.

By assessing the parliamentary and archival records, contemporary media accounts and commentary, and the memoirs of those responsible for immigration policy, this thesis will endeavour to answer the questions presented by the topic: Was there a strategic and deliberate forward-looking plan for postwar immigration? Was immigration policy comprised of something more than an opportunistic mixture of 'altruism and self-interest'? Was it formulated by policy-makers whose world views were more progressive or humanitarian than those of the "average" postwar Canadian citizen? And did those policy-makers seek to lead public opinion, or simply react to it?

With a focus on both politics and policy, this thesis describes the postwar changes to Canada's immigration policy, the factors that drove those changes, and their impact on the nation's development. Consideration of the questions presented by this topic has identified diverse influences which both propelled and impeded policy change, and has produced several conclusions. Postwar international pressure created by the refugee crisis in Europe was an initial driver of change. Later, there were domestic and economic challenges to be addressed, as policy makers sought to meet the nation's growing need for immigrants during periods when traditionally 'preferred' sources were becoming unreliable. By the mid 1950s, these realities produced initiatives which began look to new sources for immigrants.

Among the impediments to change, racism and entrenched, preferential selection criteria were key factors, as were bureaucratic inertia, interdepartmental friction, and tensions between the immigration bureaucracy and the government. The highly 'flexible' and discretionary system described in chapter two

developed with full cooperation between government and its civil service, but it was the latter group which clung most persistently to that system during the postwar period.

This thesis concludes that political concerns, more so than economic factors, social influences, or even notions of ‘altruism’ or self-interest’, exercised the greatest influence on postwar immigration policy. By examining the issues presented by this topic, and the diverse ideas and events that influenced policy, this thesis reveals a process of gradual, incremental policy transformation. That process began following the end of World War Two in 1945, and culminated with amendments to the *Immigration Act* regulations in 1962.

Chapter One

Approaching Canada's Immigration History

Immigration has intrigued Canadian scholars for many decades. Historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, journalists, and others have offered interpretations concerning the effects of immigration upon Canadian development and the policies pursued in response to it. Not surprisingly, their work has often reflected the contemporary theoretical priorities of their disciplines.

Among historians, only the early practitioners appear to have been generally disinterested in this subject. Canada's prominent early and mid-twentieth century historians such as H.A. Innis and D.G. Creighton may have been, as Carl Berger explains, "nationalists of various hues,"¹ but the experiences of immigrant groups who formed the Canadian nation do not seem to have concerned them. Innis, for example, acknowledged that the "contact of Europeans with the Indians was essential to the development of the fur trade,"² and his seminal work recounted the commercial elements of that interaction. However, Innis emphasized economic and geographical forces, rather than any human group, as the key actors in his historical narrative. As Berger notes of Innis' work, the "net impression created was one of overall human helplessness" in the face of a "material environment that constrained and channelled human effort."³ Early in his career, Innis concluded that the fur trade's "heavy one-way traffic made the trade discouraging to settlement."⁴ Thereafter, he paid little attention to immigrant "settlers." Neither *The Fur Trade in Canada* nor *The Cod Fisheries*⁵ included any reference to immigration in their indexes (although the latter work explored various conflicts between fishers and "settler" groups in North America). Throughout Innis' work on the development of "staple" resources, immigration seems to have figured prominently only in his study of the timber trade, where "a bulky export commodity ... favoured a large return cargo and thereby provided a stimulus to immigration and agricultural settlement."⁶

Although strongly influenced by Innis, particularly in his early work, Donald Creighton paid more attention to the subject of immigration. Creighton shared Innis' focus upon natural and geographical influences in the development of the nation, but he at least acknowledged the founders of

¹ Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 259.

² Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, 9.

³ Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 102.

⁴ Innis, *Problems of Staple Production in Canada*, 6.

⁵ Innis, *The Cod Fisheries, The History of an International Economy*, 53-4; 99-100; 105-6 and 108-9.

⁶ Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 99.

Canada's early commercial and political elites as immigrants, from the American colonies and, later, from Britain.⁷ His later work showed increasing interest in the topic. Creighton recognized, somewhat uncharacteristically for him, the efforts of French officials to strengthen their North American colonies by promoting immigration to New France in the seventeenth century.⁸ He also noted the "spectacular" effects of immigration upon Canada from the late nineteenth century to the outbreak of war in 1914, and again following the Second World War. Creighton was careful to explain that "the overwhelming majority" of newcomers to the Canadian west between 1901 and 1911 were "English-speaking in origin." Other immigrant groups, in his view, introduced "a new and strange element" who formed themselves into "cultural islands [that] sought to resist the levelling tide of North American civilization."⁹ Their arrival may have comprised "the greatest migration of peoples which had ever come to British North America"¹⁰ but for Creighton, the immigrants who mattered most were the intrepid explorers, merchants, and visionary politicians of earlier times, and not the "strange" interlopers who came later and in great numbers.

The views of Arthur R.M. Lower presented one notable exception to the early historiographical tendency to ignore immigration, although Lower was not so much 'interested' in immigration as he was adamantly opposed to it, throughout his career. Like Creighton, Lower was influenced by Innis, but extended his own studies of resource development in order to connect them with his greater historical passion – understanding "the emergence of the sense of a national community in Canada."¹¹ For Lower, the development of such a national community was paramount, and in his assessment it was impeded, rather than sustained, by immigration.

Among his anti-immigration views, Lower subscribed to a 'displacement theory' which posited that incoming groups caused the departure of native-born Canadians, primarily to the United States. Through selective, if not altogether spurious, statistical and scientific analysis, he rejected the notion that immigration significantly increased population or stimulated economic development. Natural increase alone, he argued, would have provided suitable levels of population growth, without the dislocations created by large-scale immigration. Lower concluded that immigration was not only "unnecessary" but downright detrimental, since "'cheap' men will always drive out our 'dear' men." Among its attendant evils, the "constant renewal of blood generation after generation" had driven living standards downward

⁷ Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*, 22-3; 208-10.

⁸ Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, 59-61.

⁹ Creighton, *Dominion of the North*, 410-3; 569-70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹¹ Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 117.

and turned Canada into “a training ground for American citizens.”¹² Lower continued throughout his life to lament the diluting effects of immigration on the development of a homogeneous Canadian ‘nationality.’¹³

Lower’s theories, like those of Innis and Creighton, were justifiably discredited by later scholars. They remain relevant, however, to any consideration of immigration policy, not for their accuracy but for their influence. In their disinterest or disapproval, Innis, Creighton, and Lower reflected the general disdain toward the immigrant that was prevalent in both English and French Canada in the early twentieth century. It is also significant that Lower characterized immigration as a long-standing national “problem,” just as Mackenzie King would do in his 1947 policy pronouncement. Lower’s views on immigration appeared periodically in popular media,¹⁴ and there is evidence of their influence upon the government. J.W. Pickersgill, who helped draft the 1947 policy statement and later served as immigration minister, had been a junior academic colleague of Lower in Winnipeg, and later recalled that he had been “influenced considerably by Arthur Lower’s views in the 1930s.” Pickersgill categorized his own attitude toward immigration as “conservative,” a candid acknowledgement for the lifelong, partisan Liberal.¹⁵

In the early decades of the twentieth century, scholarly works with a primary focus on immigration were rare and, by later standards, undistinguished. Like Lower, other commentators invariably framed the topic as a ‘problem’ in both its social and demographic implications. One early example was J.S. Woodsworth’s 1909 publication, *Strangers Within Our Gates*, which sought to draw attention to the “great, commanding, overwhelming problem”¹⁶ confronting Canada as a result of rapid and unrestrained immigration. Woodsworth understood the plight of many of Canada’s incoming ethnic groups, and he was sympathetic. Yet Woodsworth believed that a “flood” of immigrants “from all parts of Europe” was turning Canada into “the Old World’s dumping ground.” In his opinion, assimilation was the only solution; but how, he wondered, “shall we weld this heterogeneous mass into one people?”¹⁷

¹² Lower, “The Case Against Immigration,” 572-3. (Lower is identified erroneously here as “R.M. Lower”.) In fairness, Lower’s major historical survey supported his anti-immigration argument with more statistical detail and analysis of the social impacts of “mass immigration”: Lower, *Colony to Nation*, 494-6.

¹³ In later years, Lower’s views seemed to soften. He remained convinced about immigration’s detrimental impact upon the development of a national homogeneity, but suggested that his real concern had been that “our thoughtless and selfish immigration policies ... have all been founded on the desire for cheap labour.” See Heick, “Historical Perspectives: An Interview with Arthur R.M. Lower,” 534.

¹⁴ See, for example, Lower, “Can Canada Do Without Immigrants?” 3-4; 70-1. (This is an almost verbatim version of the *Queen’s Quarterly* article referenced in footnote 10, above.)

¹⁵ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 293.

¹⁶ Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates*, 162.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166-7. For an unusually enlightened early perspective, see Arthur Hawkes, *The Birthright*. Published in 1919, Hawkes’ flowery call for a uniform Canadian citizenship that would include even ‘foreigners,’ also showed

Much of the book was devoted to Woodsworth's descriptions of various ethnic groups and cataloging them according to their ability to be assimilated. The racism inherent in that exercise is arresting today, but illustrative of the cultural and intellectual milieu in which twentieth century views on immigration and race were forming.¹⁸

A different perspective on the immigration 'problem' was offered by Andre Siegfried's *The Race Question in Canada*, published in 1906. Siegfried, a French political scientist, presented a wide-ranging analysis of Canadian political life, particularly the role and activities of parties, in which he also assessed the demographic impacts of immigration upon French Canada. First, there was the "leakage" of population through emigration to the United States, a trend for which neither immigration (from France) nor natural increase could compensate. Siegfried also observed that while thousands of European immigrants recently arrived in Canada "make haste to assimilate themselves to their Anglo-Saxon environment in the West," no corresponding trend was occurring in Quebec. Finally, there was the "penetration" of American influence, through immigration and investment, a trend which Siegfried interpreted as threatening to both French and English Canada. But it was French Canada, "still bowed under the burden of defeat," to which the "problem" of immigration posed the greatest immediate threat.¹⁹

More comprehensive examinations of Canada's immigration history gradually began to appear. Among the first was University of Toronto professor W.G. Smith's *A Study in Canadian Immigration*, published in 1920. Initially undertaken as a study commissioned by the Dominion government, the work suffered (as Smith modestly acknowledged) from "many defects."²⁰ Nevertheless, he outlined in broad strokes the various immigration movements, from "the days of Champlain and Cartier" through to the massive early twentieth century influx.²¹ Smith expended much effort cataloguing and describing the new ethnic groups, and analysing the various challenges which immigration had raised: assimilation, urbanization, illiteracy, and the influx of delinquents and "defectives." His concluding chapters suggested solutions to these problems, through more rigorous screening and enforcement of exclusionary legislative provisions and increased efforts to 'Canadianize' alien newcomers. Unsurprisingly, Smith's arguments

insights of empathy and self-awareness: See pages 117-8, and 295: "Do we want the 'foreigner' to become a Canadian? ... What has been done to make him feel like a Canadian? If nothing has been done, is he to blame – or are we?"

¹⁸ Historian Frances Swyripa describes Woodsworth's effort as "a succinct handbook to the crystallizing ethnic hierarchy" of its time: Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Studies and the Canadian Prairies*, 254. Indeed it was.

¹⁹ Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada*, 181-93.

²⁰ Smith, *A Study in Canadian Immigration*, 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 37-67.

also reflected the prevailing racial views of his time. “It goes without saying,” he concluded, “that ... those who are born in the British Isles will be preferred ... as immigrants in our midst.”²²

Less condescending, and narrower in scope, was a 1928 study of British emigration to North America during the century prior to Confederation by historian Helen Cowan. Cowan ambitiously documented the causes of emigration during that period and the hardships endured by those who departed Britain in various migratory ‘waves’. She also examined the role and influence of the state upon the immigration process; in both Britain and North America. (Some officials promoted immigration; others were opposed, or demonstrated insensitive and unhelpful ‘laissez-faire’ attitudes that offered no protection to migrating groups.) Finally, Cowan detailed efforts to reform the process and improve protections for migrants, both at sea and upon arrival.

Cowan strove to describe “the heroic quality of the human outpouring which peopled the British North American colonies.”²³ To their credit, both Cowan and Smith avoided some of the condescension, and racism, that characterized other contemporary viewpoints. Still, there were substantial deficiencies. As historian Franca Iacovetta has noted, their work displayed a “racial bias” toward immigrants of British stock, and revealed “far more about policy and settlement patterns than the day-to-day lives of newcomers.”²⁴

Other scholars followed. A decade later, Norman MacDonald’s *Canada, 1763-1841: Immigration and Settlement* offered a different perspective on the topic. Like Cowan, MacDonald reviewed the economic and political causes that propelled emigration from Britain,²⁵ and – also like Cowan – he generally avoided racial assumptions and stereotypes. MacDonald, however, focused primarily upon Imperial land regulation in British North America, documenting the overall ineffectiveness of various settlement schemes and land-grant programs. Throughout the period, he argued, “the Imperial government practised in all the Colonies a complicated and wasteful system of disposing of Crown lands.”²⁶ MacDonald concluded with a description of the economic and social consequences of settlement for the development of the colonies. The strength of his study lay in that

²² Ibid., 178.

²³ Cowan, *British Emigration to British North America*, x.

²⁴ Iacovetta, “Manly Militants,” 221.

²⁵ MacDonald succinctly summarized the long list of contributing factors: “overpopulation and destitution, engrossing and higher rents, industrial disturbances and agricultural depressions, unemployment and low wages, a restricted market and high taxation, hunger and discontent.” MacDonald, *Canada, 1763-1841: Immigration and Settlement*, 28.

²⁶ Ibid., 510.

economic analysis, and MacDonald appears to have been among the first to examine immigration primarily as an economic phenomenon, an approach which later scholars would embrace.

MacDonald identified one issue that would become a recurring concern for later commentators when he noted the “constant stream of emigrants across the Canadas and into the United States.” This “lamentable exodus” he wrote, was “one of the most conspicuous and unfortunate effects of the evils in the land system of the British North American Colonies.”²⁷ Evidence that many newcomers remained only briefly before ‘re-emigrating,’ usually to the United States, was attracting scholarly attention. However, re-emigration presented a particular challenge for scholars because it was difficult to quantify accurately. (“The emigrant,” as one sociologist observed, “is not a loud figure in history.”²⁸) One detailed analysis of this phenomenon was undertaken by economist Roland Wilson in 1932.²⁹ Wilson explained that Canada had maintained “reasonably accurate” records of immigrant numbers only from 1897 onward, and in earlier periods had documented immigration from Britain but not the United States. Official statistics respecting emigration, moreover, were almost non-existent. Wilson therefore resorted to detailed examination of census data and the records of various carriers, completing the exercise by factoring in an estimated death rate, in order to fill in the statistical gaps. His most noteworthy determination was that in all but sixteen of the fifty-eight years covered by his study, Canada had incurred a net loss in population from this “net-migration” process.³⁰ Concern over emigration would remain an important component of the perceived ‘problem’ of immigration, as Lower’s views demonstrated.

A later generation of historians, also dedicated to narratives that were ‘national’ in scope, included some analysis of immigration themes in their work, often reaching optimistic conclusions regarding the development of particular regions or economic sectors during various periods. Describing the period 1896-1921 as one of great transformation, Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook acknowledge that more than two million newcomers “added a new ethnic dimension to Canadian life” during that period, and challenged the “old Canada.”³¹ However, the authors generally characterize the settlement of Canada’s prairie west through immigration as a resounding success, albeit one accompanied by some racial tension. Special praise is accorded Laurier and Interior minister Clifford Sifton, as skilled politicians whose acuity proved equal to most problems, including immigration.³² Others offer similar

²⁷ Ibid., 522-3.

²⁸ Popiel, “A Barbarian Power?” 151.

²⁹ Wilson, “Migration Movements in Canada, 1868-1925.” (Wilson was an Australian whose academic sojourn in Canada appears to have been brief. I found no record of other publications by him on Canadian subjects.)

³⁰ Ibid., 178-81. (The period 1901-1914, of course, showed net gains in population in every year except 1909; see Table X, 182.)

³¹ Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, 1.

³² Ibid., 50; 54-68.

views of the post-1945 period. Desmond Morton, for example, writes: “Millions of newcomers to the country found their skills and talents in such urgent demand that older citizens even forgot their prejudices. Prosperity did marvellous things for tolerance.”³³ Alluding to one important influence on postwar policy, John English explains how a “desire to behave responsibly internationally opened [Canada’s] doors” to thousands who sought refuge from postwar Europe.³⁴

A more detailed (and less glowing) analysis was offered by Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English in their political and economic survey of Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. There were, the authors explain, significant differences between the Laurier government’s policy *intentions*, and the actual results achieved, as significant numbers of immigrants who had been expected to engage in agriculture gravitated instead toward urban centres.³⁵ Moreover, the attitudes behind those policy intentions were certainly “not free of prejudice.” Numerous legislative provisions and policies designed to control, restrict and discriminate, rather than promote immigration, are documented.³⁶ John H. Thompson and Allen Seager offer a similarly frank appraisal in their study of the inter-war period, as they discuss various immigration policies and the racialized views and preferences that lay behind them. In particular, they note the cynical politics that characterized immigration policy under Mackenzie King in the 1920s. These included vague campaign promises to encourage immigration, and a commitment – not fulfilled – to reform discriminatory rules in return for third party support following the 1926 election. Thompson and Seager also document the government’s 1925 agreement permitting railway companies to operate a private an extra-legal recruitment process bringing immigrants from Europe, an arrangement they characterise as a “most remarkable abdication of federal responsibility.”³⁷ Later, and even more reprehensibly, “Canada’s response to the flood of 800,000 Jews who poured out of Europe to escape the concentration camps was to raise the dam of immigration restrictions even higher.”³⁸ These themes would appear prominently in other analyses.

Economists were among the first from other academic disciplines to investigate immigration policy. In 1951, Mabel Timlin published the results of a study of Canada’s ‘absorptive capacity’ which she had undertaken for the Dominion government at the request of Hugh Keenleyside. Timlin

³³ Morton, “Foreword,” in English, *Years of Growth*, 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁵ Bothwell, Drummond, and English, *Canada, 1900 - 1945*, 60-1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-9; 246-7. (In an earlier work on post-1945 Canada, the authors dwelt only briefly on the subject. They noted that the “flow of immigration after the Second World War landed hundreds of thousands whose sole desire was to adapt as quickly as possible to English-speaking society,” but otherwise limited their analysis to a presentation of postwar immigration statistics: See Bothwell, Drummond, and English, *Canada Since 1945*, 31-3; 154.)

³⁷ Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939*, 130.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

persuasively argued the economic benefits that higher immigration levels would create, through increased domestic consumption and expanded productivity and exports. She concluded that “a larger population for Canada should mean a higher physical product per capita and hence higher real incomes for Canadian citizens.”³⁹ The Liberal government, focused by this time on the management of an expanding postwar economy, undoubtedly welcomed Timlin’s views.

A later and more comprehensive economic study was Alan G. Green’s *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, published in 1976. Green supplemented a chronological review of postwar immigration policy with detailed economic analysis. Although he did not openly dispute Timlin’s argument, Green adopted a different approach to the ‘cause and effect’ factors that had influenced policy, as he theorized that foreign demand for Canadian staple products stimulated the domestic requirement for labour, thereby triggering periods of substantial immigration into Canada.⁴⁰ Generally, however, Green was not inclined to criticise. He noted understandingly that “flexibility” had been the “central feature” of immigration policy during the twentieth century, a necessary feature since “small countries like Canada must be able to adjust their policies to offset or cushion the impact of alteration in the world demand for its products.” Not surprisingly, Green concluded that immigration must be understood as “an economic not a demographic phenomenon, and policy should reflect this bias.”⁴¹

More recent and more scientific is *The Immigration Dilemma*, a 1992 publication edited by Steven Globerman. Globerman contributes a summary of the economic factors that influenced immigration policy, carefully distinguishing those from more traditional (and non-economic) cultural and demographic arguments. The volume’s emphasis, he explains, is on “empirical evidence bearing upon the major policy issues” rather than “theoretical” analysis. Currently, Globerman noted, “most economists do not argue for the elimination of restrictions on the movement of people. That is, they generally support the maintenance of barriers to immigration.”⁴² Nevertheless, as one contributor observed, “the economic objections ... asserted by the opponents of immigration have all been falsified in the past decade or so.”⁴³ The volume’s various articles “reinforce other studies suggesting that the historical impact of immigration has been relatively modest.”⁴⁴ Many scholars would disagree with this conclusion, but in their generally dispassionate view of the topic economists have remained consistent.⁴⁵

³⁹ Timlin, *Does Canada Need More People?* 37-8; 122.

⁴⁰ Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴² Globerman, “Background to Immigration Policy in Canada,” 2; 12.

⁴³ Simon, “The Economic Effects of Immigration: Theory and Evidence,” 145.

⁴⁴ Globerman, “Background to Immigration Policy in Canada,” 15.

⁴⁵ One historian who shared this economic focus was Donald Avery, whose study of early twentieth century European immigration to Canada began with the observation that “Canadian immigration policy can only be

Representatives of other academic disciplines, including sociology and political science, gradually joined the immigration debate. John Porter's pioneering 1965 study of the relationship between social 'class' and power remains a leading example of the former. Porter devoted considerable analysis to the importance of mobility, ethnicity and migration in the formation of a class structure within Canadian society, at one point describing the country, with some bewilderment, as "a huge demographic railway station."⁴⁶ His analysis, however, was penetrating and insightful, and Porter did not hesitate to challenge other perspectives. For example, he agreed in part with Lower that "nationalist sentiments ... are unlikely to develop when the population of a country has been built up and dissipated as Canada's has been," but otherwise disputed Lower's argument that "cheap" immigrants drove out "dear" Canadians. "It is difficult," Porter reasoned, "to see how immigrant peasants affect the career opportunities of the professional ... or ... skilled classes because skilled jobs require skilled workers." To Porter, the more accurate interpretation was that "cheap unskilled immigrant labour was replacing cheap unskilled Canadian labour as the latter was drawn into the United States by somewhat higher real wages."⁴⁷ Clearly, Porter recognized the importance of both cultural and economic influences on immigration policy. The selection of 'suitable' immigrants, he noted, follows "evaluations by the 'charter' members of the society of the jobs to be filled and the 'right' kind of immigrants to fill them."⁴⁸

Despite having been written a half century ago, Porter's work remains persuasive. Later sociologists would contribute to the field by examining immigration more narrowly, through the experiences of particular groups. Contributions by Porter's contemporaries, however, proved less enduring. Writing in 1950, for example, S.D. Clark suggested rather mildly that "in many ways the Canadian community has been a northern extension of the American," and that "cultural differences" among newcomers tended to disappear upon settlement in North America. "The breakdown of cultural differences on the frontier," Clark concluded, "hastened the development of a single Canadian type."⁴⁹ Although Clark's later work on the development of a Canadian community received much acclaim, this early analysis now appears regrettably superficial.

understood in terms of the country's participation in a wider transatlantic labour market." (Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 9.) However, Avery also documented numerous non-economic influences which emerged, particularly after World War One: "Whereas before 1914 economic considerations had been paramount, now the principal criteria became political and cultural acceptability." *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁶ Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic*, 33.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37; 58-9. (With this line of argument, Porter also disputed the analysis of political scientist D.C. Corbett, whose optimistic views are discussed below; see Porter, 39-40; 58.)

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁹ Clark, "The Canadian Community," 375-6; 386.

Political scientists also joined the postwar discussion. Among the first was UBC professor David Corbett, whose 1957 publication offered a detailed but generally uncritical analysis of postwar immigration policy. Corbett noted understandingly the irreconcilable interests and contradictory views that confronted policy makers, from both French and English Canada.⁵⁰ Still, numerous aspects of immigration policy troubled him; the overt discrimination against certain ethnic groups; a vague legislative framework that permitted unfettered administrative discretion; and the subterfuge in such regulatory devices as literacy tests and ‘continuous journey’ requirements. Corbett’s insights on these issues were remarkable for his time, but he was satisfied to conclude that “post-war immigration has been very successfully absorbed, indeed seized upon, by the Canadian economy.”⁵¹

Political scientists who followed later contributed less sanguine appraisals. In 1987, Reginald Whitaker offered a highly critical interpretation, single-mindedly documenting secretive and undemocratic components to postwar policy. Particularly egregious, in Whitaker’s view, was the government’s application of security screening procedures (implemented in response to the Gouzenko affair) to exclude applicants from certain countries, and especially any who were suspected of left-wing political views.⁵² James Eayrs presented an equally acerbic assessment of the history of Canada’s exclusionary immigration policy toward India, an embarrassing legacy as Canadian and other Commonwealth leaders sought to deal with Indian independence during the late 1940s.⁵³

Studies of a socio-historical nature comprise the most recent body of work within postwar immigration historiography. Publications in this category are numerous. Although disparate in subject and theme, they often document the experience of particular groups, or episodes or periods when admission to Canada was restricted. Other common qualities include a focus on the wartime or immediate postwar period, and highly critical assessments of government immigration policy, particularly as it impacted certain groups. Historian Irving Abella offered a memorable example when he ruefully observed that “Canada is a peculiar nation. Peopled by immigrants, it is a country, paradoxically, which hates immigration.”⁵⁴

Abella’s work was among the early contributions to this field. He and co-author Harold Troper examined the period before and during World War Two when Canada systematically denied entry to desperate European refugees, particularly Jews. *None Is Too Many* described more than the details of an

⁵⁰ Corbett, *Canada’s Immigration Policy*, 18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵² Whitaker, *Double Standard*, 18-34.

⁵³ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 226-8.

⁵⁴ Abella, “Foreword,” in Roberts, *Whence They Came*, vii.

exclusionary immigration policy; it also documented “a Canada of the 1930s and 1940s permeated by racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.” Response to its publication was so emotional that in a subsequent edition the authors found it necessary to remind their readers – and perhaps themselves – that the book was “first and foremost a work of history.”⁵⁵ Elsewhere, the authors offered an equally categorical appraisal: “Canadian immigration policy had always been as ethnically selective as it was economically self-serving.”⁵⁶

Historian Franca Iacovetta has contributed substantially to the historiography of postwar immigration, approaching the subject from several directions. Iacovetta’s *Such Hardworking People* (1992) presents a detailed study of the experience of postwar Italian immigrants in Toronto. She documents the skills, resources, and strategies, which enabled their successful “transition from being peasants in an underdeveloped rural economy to becoming proletarians in an urban industrial economy.”⁵⁷ Focusing primarily on the experiences of this group – its many challenges and hardships – Iacovetta’s thesis emphasized the importance of many socio-historical factors: gender; family economy; racism; immigrant agency; and militancy, all of which contributed to a complex transformation process.

Iacovetta’s assessment of Canadian immigration policy was direct and critical.⁵⁸ She also noted that immigration historians generally had not, as of yet, “explored in detail the relations between immigrants and immigrant policy.”⁵⁹ In a later work, Iacovetta undertook to address this historiographical deficiency. The book’s title – *Gatekeepers* – foretells many of its conclusions, which criticize governments, the media, and other organizations involved in receiving, acclimatizing, and ‘Canadianizing’ postwar newcomers. In between these two studies, Iacovetta also produced a detailed historiographical paper, reviewing both “general trends” in immigrant history and, in greater detail, the more recent socio-historical themes. Anticipating her later work, she advocated for greater emphasis on immigration policy through examination of “the many encounters between immigrants and those members of the host society who also affected immigrant life.”⁶⁰ Her conclusions, however, placed greater emphasis on the need for “more specialized studies of ... immigrants and immigrant communities,” and “a more inclusive and synthetic approach.”⁶¹ Policy, presumably, would comprise just one element of such an approach.

⁵⁵ Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, ix-x.

⁵⁶ Abella and Troper, “The line must be drawn somewhere,” 182.

⁵⁷ Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, xxiii.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21-37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁰ Iacovetta, “Manly Militants,” 218; 240.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

Other contributions to this area have varied in both substance and quality. Iacovetta explains that the 1980s and 1990s saw “a noticeable shift away from studying policy,” and toward documenting the experience and perspective of particular immigrant groups.⁶² The results, she observes, were mixed. Studies of various Baltic groups are among the least successful, often appearing both “rushed and superficial” and “ahistorical in approach.”⁶³ One such example is Milda Danys’ examination of postwar Lithuanian immigration to Canada. Danys based her work upon archival research and extensive oral interviews, but the work’s main weakness was its failure to support conclusions with evidence. Observations regarding the motives of bureaucrats responsible for policy administration frequently appear speculative⁶⁴, and the author’s main conclusion – that the government favoured Baltic refugees – is likewise unsupported by evidence. This is especially unfortunate given that the argument is likely accurate.

Estonian groups have fared little better. Karl Aun’s *The Political Refugees*, published in 1985, reads like a cultural celebration designed to introduce the Estonian community to Canada’s ‘charter’ ethnic groups. Aun’s treatment of postwar immigration policy is brief and uncritical. He notes, for example, that most Estonian refugees permitted to immigrate were vastly over-qualified for the farm labour jobs to which they were recruited, but concludes: “We should not blame Canada since most other countries did not even offer what Canada did. ...Any country would consider its own need first and assign the unsolicited immigrants to jobs its own people would not do.”⁶⁵ Somewhat less magnanimous is Linda Mannik’s recent study of the Estonian group who sought refuge in Canada aboard the *SS Walnut* in 1948. Mannik, an anthropologist, seeks to describe and interpret the experiences of this refugee group through photographs, contemporary media reports, and interviews. Although policy is not her main focus, she demonstrates the impact of racial factors – in official immigration policy, in popular media, and in societal perceptions about who is ‘acceptable’ – upon the experience of this particular group. Mannik is critical of Canadian immigration policy, and she is especially critical of the official representations of immigrant history, such as those presented in displays at the Pier 21 Museum in Halifax. However, her criticism is restrained, perhaps due to the unique circumstances under which the *Walnut* passengers arrived in Canada and the government’s quick decision to waive its standard processing requirements and grant them immediate admission.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid., 226.

⁶³ Ibid., 238

⁶⁴ Danys, *DP: Lithuanian Immigration to Canada After the Second World War*, 68; 213.

⁶⁵ Aun, *The Political Refugees*, 22-4.

⁶⁶ Mannik, *Photography, Memory, and Refugee Identity*. The author’s appraisal of the principles underlying Canadian immigration policy appears at pp. 57-8. The unique and creative application of those principles in the case of this particular group is described at pp. 62-9. For an analysis of media coverage, see pp. 70-7.

Other ethnic groups have received better historical treatment. A series of articles compiled by Wsevoid Isajiw, Yury Boshyk, and Roman Senkus offers a richly detailed history of the experiences of displaced Ukrainian groups in postwar Europe, a small percentage of whom migrated to Canada.⁶⁷ Although immigration policy is not the volume's primary focus, several contributors offer unsparing assessments of the attitudes shown by receiving countries, including Canada. Slow to grasp the enormity of the refugee problem (and the reality behind Soviet repatriation demands), Western allies dithered. "Offers of resettlement were extended," as Boshyk explains, "but only when it was politically and economically beneficial for the host countries to do so."⁶⁸ Historian Harold Troper and archivist Myron Momryk provide succinct explanations of the problem which the refugee crisis presented for Canadian authorities, and of the restrictive regulatory framework upon which Canadian policy was based.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, geographer Lubomyr Luciuk interprets the experience of postwar Ukrainian refugees as a search for "place" on the part of a group left stateless by successive repressions, invasions, and defeats. Luciuk's work emphasizes the efforts of Ukrainian-Canadian organizations and individuals to assist postwar refugees, more so than those of the Canadian government. The work is less an analysis of policy than a description of the ongoing wariness that characterized the attitude of the government toward its Ukrainian-Canadian citizens and prospective Ukrainian immigrants. Luciuk acknowledges the factors that "inclined the nation's gatekeepers to take a relatively favourable stance on Ukrainian DP immigration,"⁷⁰ but also described the bitterness caused by the government's ongoing concerns about 'nationalistic' Ukrainian-Canadian political activities, and among displaced Ukrainians who felt "picked over or discarded without the slightest compunction" by immigration officials in European displaced person camps.⁷¹ Ultimately, for Luciuk, postwar immigration policy amounted to little more than an attempt "to preserve ... Canada's Anglo-Protestant status quo." As for those responsible for its administration, he finds only "a muddled ... collection of mediocrities" whose greatest failing, in his view, was to be "profoundly unversant with Ukrainian affairs."⁷²

⁶⁷ Isajiw et al., *The Refugee Experience*. The authors estimate some 250,000 Ukrainians among "the ranks of the displaced" living in European refugee camps by war's end, a small percentage of the millions displaced during the war; xvi. Of these, some 35,000 made their way to Canada during the decade after 1945; 35-7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 373-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 402-5; 414-5.

⁷⁰ Luciuk, *Searching For Place*, 199.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 108; 209-10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 209; 265. (There was, of course, ample historic justification for the aggrieved attitude of the Ukrainian-Canadian community toward Canadian immigration policy. Earlier groups had been enthusiastically recruited under the Laurier-Sifton program to populate the Canadian West, only to find themselves classified as 'enemy aliens' during World War One and, in some cases, interned. For a good effort to illuminate this topic, see Kordan, *Enemy Aliens*.)

During the first half of the twentieth century, through legislation and by policy, Canada maintained a catalogue of prospective immigrant groups, listed in descending order of preference. As noted above, groups from across this discriminatory ‘spectrum’ have received scholarly attention. It is perhaps unsurprising that the level of criticism directed toward this policy framework has often varied according to the experience of the particular group under consideration. Angelika Sauer examines the postwar process by which German (or, more precisely, ethnic German) refugees were admitted to Canada. She demonstrates the impact of foreign policy concerns upon Canadian actions in this area, and argues convincingly that historians have generally neglected “the international political environment as a framework in which immigration policy was shaped.”⁷³ Sauer is not complimentary of the government’s handling of this issue, as she documents fumbling responses to decisions by other Allied powers regarding postwar Europe taken without Canadian input, and a reliance on private organizations to bring German refugees to Canada. However, she reflects only briefly upon the speedy restoration of this ethnic group to ‘preferred’ immigrant status, and reports having uncovered “no conclusive evidence” of preferential treatment toward Germans on the part of Canadian officials. Sauer concludes simply “that Germans still held a high place in the public’s ethnic hierarchy,”⁷⁴ and makes no mention of the fact that other refugee groups, equally desperate or deserving, were left waiting.

Even less critical and more celebratory is a collection of reminiscences published following a 1989 symposium to commemorate Canada’s response to the 1956 Hungarian refugee crisis. Edited by historian Robert Keyserlingk, this series of articles by academics and former civil servants offers detailed insight into this successful emergency initiative. Particularly useful is the description by a former Immigration Branch officer of the postwar expansion of the mandate and administrative capacity of the Branch.⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, the presence at the conference of former immigration minister J.W. Pickersgill (who had personally directed the initiative) helped to ensure that criticism would be restrained. However, there are numerous differences in recollection and viewpoint, including a disagreement about origins of the historic initiative. Keyserlingk’s decision to allow these to remain unresolved is the work’s most obvious weakness.

Others who have examined the experiences of ‘non-preferred’ immigrant groups have reached varying appraisals of postwar policy. In 1963, Ben Lappin’s *The Redeemed Children* recounted the rescue and resettlement of 1116 Jewish war orphans through the collective efforts of the Canadian Jewish community. Lappin’s focus is on the group’s experience upon arrival in Canada and their interaction with

⁷³ Sauer, “A Matter of Domestic Policy?” 228.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁵ Cunliffe, Harry, “The Liberalization of Immigration Policy From 1945 to 1956: An Insider’s View,” 13-23.

Jewish communities and organizations in their destination cities. The 1947 Order-in-Council authorizing their admission to Canada is cited, and the author notes the conditions imposed by the government: “that the Canadian Jewish Congress would assume the financial responsibility of maintaining each war orphan ...and ... that the care of the children would be entrusted to accredited case-work agencies.”⁷⁶ However, these stipulations – clearly imposed to preclude any demand on public resources – are noted without comment, and Lappin’s account offers none of the criticism of Canada’s anti-Semitic policy history which distinguished Abella and Troper’s later work. More recently, Lynne Taylor’s *Polish Orphans of Tengeru* documents another postwar refugee initiative involving orphaned children. Taylor recounts the experiences of a group of displaced Polish Catholic children who arrived in Canada via Africa in 1949. The story is told against a background of complicated international postwar politics and disputes, and although Canadian immigration policy is not a primary focus, the depiction of a confused, directionless policy is very clear. Historian Marlene Epp offers a similar perspective in her study of Mennonite refugees, many of whom were women displaced and widowed during the war. Once again, immigration policy is not the central focus, as the author documents an arduous refugee experience and the often uncomfortable relationship between those who came to Canada and the established Mennonite community. There are, however, numerous policy insights. For example, Epp describes the extensive relief and administrative work undertaken in refugee camps by the Mennonite Central Committee, functions which government emissaries might reasonably have been expected to perform.⁷⁷ Elsewhere, she notes that “in the two years immediately after the war, Canada’s doors remained firmly closed,” although restrictions were eased later, under categories such as the ‘close relative’ provisions, after persistent lobbying by community groups.⁷⁸

As with other studies of ‘non-preferred’ immigrant groups, those documenting the experience of African and West Indian immigrants are unsparing in their appraisal of postwar policy. The statutory framework provides the foundation for these analyses. One scholar notes that successive Immigration Acts and the policies implemented under them affirmed “the racialization of potential immigrants through a nationality preference system”⁷⁹ under which ‘non-whites’ were invariably ranked last. Elsewhere, sociologist Agnes Calliste examines the history of domestic labour programs under which small numbers of Caribbean women were permitted to immigrate early in the twentieth century and in the postwar period. Such ‘schemes,’ Calliste demonstrates, responded to ongoing demands for cheap domestic labour in occupations which Canadians and other preferred immigrant groups avoided. The program “did not

⁷⁶ Lappin, Ben, *The Redeemed Children*, 12.

⁷⁷ Epp, *Women without Men*, 71-6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁹ Elabor-Idemudia, “Challenges Confronting African Immigrant Women in the Canadian Workforce,” 95-6.

indicate liberalization of Canada's immigration policy." Instead, it "reinforced the racial, class and gender stereotypes about black women being inherently suited to domestic work," thereby perpetuating "the oppression of black working-class women."⁸⁰ Sociologist Alan Simmons concurs, arguing that legislative revisions during the 1960s represented a belated shift toward a "non-racist" (but not "anti-racist") immigration policy. For Simmons, the continuation of the domestic worker program after the legislative revisions of 1962 and 1967 "continued to reinforce ... stereotyping and discrimination," and thus perpetuated the racist principles which had long characterized Canadian policy.⁸¹

Several survey works also contribute to the historiographical literature in this area. Among these are recent studies by Valerie Knowles, and by Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, which present general chronologies of Canada's immigration history.⁸² Both offer useful introductory overviews, particularly in their treatment of early twentieth century and postwar developments, although both strive mightily to avoid criticism in their analysis of immigration policy. The latter work, co-authored by a law professor, contributes substantially to the literature through explanation and analysis of many important legislative, judicial, and administrative developments.

Two earlier survey histories complete the immigration literature. In 1977, historian Gerald E. Dirks introduced refugee policy as a distinct category within Canadian immigration history. His detailed study carefully delineates between refugees and other migratory groups, and traces a policy development process that evolved in response to diverse and conflicting pressures. In Dirks' view, however, the approach that emerged was often uninspired. "The world's refugee problem," he explains, "had increased rather than decreased following World War I and the Russian revolution. The policies of Canadian governments failed to reflect this condition."⁸³ Dirks identifies numerous factors – nativism and antisemitism; a fear of exacerbating poor economic conditions; policy disputes among government departments; and widespread indifference to the outside world – to explain an immigration strategy which he characterizes as "unimaginative, plodding, and inadequate,"⁸⁴ during the immediate postwar period.

⁸⁰ Calliste, "Canada's Immigration Policy and Domesticity from the Caribbean," 134; 150-1. (Calliste also notes growing pressure by Caribbean people upon the Canadian government for a more open immigration policy. Examining this issue in greater detail, historians Bruce Muirhead and Greg Donaghy document the challenges encountered by postwar governments as they attempted to articulate "a coherent strategic vision for [Canada's] relations with the Caribbean," particularly from 1956 onward. Trade and foreign aid issues, along with immigration pressures, compounded those challenges: Donaghy and Muirhead, "Interests but No Foreign Policy," 279-89.)

⁸¹ Simmons, "Racism and Immigration Policy," 88. Notably, in his conclusions Simmons seemed prepared to acknowledge some gradual improvement over time. By 1989, he declared, "Much of the evidence on racism in Canadian immigration policies is ambiguous" (111).

⁸² Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, and Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*.

⁸³ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 43.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

Canada's eventual participation in various refugee initiatives is shown to have been undertaken grudgingly and in response to growing pressure from new sources including the international community and the media, or from within the government's own bureaucracy. At best, Dirks argues, Canada's refugee policy until the mid-1960s "consisted of a series of *ad hoc* measures," upon which economic factors exercised the greatest influence. Political considerations were also relevant, as were humanitarian concerns, although the latter, Dirks concludes, were "the most difficult to assess ... as a motivating force in government refugee policy."⁸⁵

In her 1972 publication, *Canada and Immigration*, political scientist Freda Hawkins offered an overview of postwar immigration policy that remains the most ambitious work on the subject. Hawkins contextualizes Canadian policy by comparison with other jurisdictions, showing that Canada was one among many receiving nations to adopt highly selective criteria based primarily upon economic factors. She also reviews in detail the "preconditions of Canada's postwar immigration operations." Along with the international and economic pressures which other scholars have identified, Hawkins explores other influences on policy, including "the design and functioning of Canadian federalism," (a reference to the shared constitutional jurisdiction over immigration between the provinces and the federal government) and conflicting and troublesome currents of public opinion, especially in French Canada.⁸⁶ Hawkins' research included interviews with civil servants from several federal departments, many of whom are not identified but were among those responsible for administrative operations and program delivery, in Canada and abroad. Hawkins' interest in (and empathy for) the recollections of these current and former employees adds a perspective not evident in other studies, which typically focus almost exclusively on the activities of political decision-makers or senior bureaucrats.⁸⁷

Hawkins argues that postwar immigration policy reflected neither a coherent plan nor a consistent strategy. "It is commonly believed," she concludes, "that Canadian immigration policy is arrived at by a careful balancing of conflicting pressures originating in the Canadian community as a whole. In my view, nothing could be further from the truth."⁸⁸ Perhaps it should not surprise that Hawkins identifies the Prime Minister's 1947 policy statement as the origin of these deficiencies. Mackenzie King's lofty but

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 228; 254.

⁸⁶ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 88. Elsewhere, structural problems within the public service, and a lack of political consensus are also cited as factors which influenced, or inhibited, postwar policy; *Ibid.*, 333-8.

⁸⁷ Insights provided by these interviews included recollection of an "unsatisfactory relationship" between the Citizenship and Immigration Branches following their 1950 merger into a new federal immigration department (96-8). Elsewhere, they describe widespread morale problems among immigration officials who felt "unappreciated" and "hampered," by a lack of support and clear policy direction from the government, conflict and competition with other departments, and poor immigration legislation (336-7).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 348.

ambiguous references to “population growth,” to “economic development” and to “absorptive capacity,” she concludes, “had never been adequately discussed or explored at the political or official level.” By the end of the King-St. Laurent era, Hawkins finds “no evidence...of a forward-looking, developmental approach on the part of the government, [and] no suggestion of experiment, inquiry, or objective assessment of results.”⁸⁹ Regulatory and legislative changes implementing more liberal immigration criteria during the 1960s are attributed vaguely to some “indefinable moment, buried deep in the Diefenbaker era,”⁹⁰ and not to any earlier postwar developments. Hawkins’ assessment is not unique, but by its detailed focus on policy, this work offers a significant contribution to this area.

Each of the works described above has contributed to an understanding of how immigration has shaped Canada. Yet the topic is so broad and diverse that no single explanation or approach – economic, social, or political – can be exhaustive. Even as a collective, the historiographical literature leaves significant areas unexplored. Suspicion and recrimination often prevail, as shown by the number of studies that describe only *ad hoc* approaches and self-serving motivations to immigration policy in Canada. Some focus upon only one factor, or a single ethnic group, thereby eschewing the multidimensional nature of policy. Policy, however, is a diverse concept, with many component elements and different meanings. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* acknowledges its frequent connection to the legislative process, defining policy as “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government.”⁹¹ Policy, therefore, encompasses both anticipated (“proposed”) and actual (“adopted”) outcomes. Few of the works noted above endeavour to precisely define policy, or recognize its component parts, before launching into their analyses. They seldom distinguish what is *planned* from what is ultimately *achieved*, through the enactment of legislative provisions and the implementation of regulatory orders and operational policies to apply and enforce those provisions. They also frequently overlook the degree to which policy comprises a response to unexpected events or circumstances. The following chapters will contribute to the literature in this area by considering each of these elements as important components of immigration policy. Among the questions to be addressed is whether the literature on postwar immigration policy is complete, or whether a different and more policy-focused perspective may offer new understanding and insight.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 110-12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

⁹¹ *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 2001 ed., 1122.

Chapter Two

Managing the ‘Problem’ of Immigration: The Evolution of a Policy Framework

The British statute which created the Dominion of Canada contained provisions designed to divide and delineate powers between the federal and provincial governments. A reading of those provisions reveals that the architects of the *British North America Act* – the ‘Fathers of Confederation’ – envisioned a highly centralized union in which the federal government would exercise jurisdiction over legislative matters that were perceived to be most important. Sections 91 and 92 of the Act identified the legislative powers to be vested in the central and provincial governments respectively, with the former exercising “broader, general powers”¹ over such matters as trade and commerce, taxation, defence, banking, and criminal law. The provinces, in contrast, were granted authority over their own ‘constitutions’, limited powers of direct taxation relating to “provincial purposes,” responsibility for hospitals, provincial property and civil rights, and “Generally, all Matters of a merely local or private Nature in the Province.”² As an exultant John A. Macdonald explained, the BNA Act went even further, also conferring ‘residual’ powers on the central government:

We have strengthened the General Government. We have given the General Legislature all the great subjects of legislation. We have conferred on them not only specifically and in detail, all the powers which are incidental to sovereignty, but we have expressly declared that all subjects of general interest not distinctly and exclusively conferred upon the local governments and local legislatures, shall be conferred upon the general government and legislature.³

Neither section 91 or 92 of the BNA Act addressed constitutional responsibility for immigration. Instead, a separate provision – section 95 of the Act – authorized both the federal and provincial legislatures to “make laws in relation to Agriculture ... and to Immigration,” within their respective constitutional jurisdictions. These two subject areas thus became matters of ‘concurrent’ jurisdiction, in recognition of the reality that each could be expected to involve both national and local interests. As W.H. McConnell notes, “the fact that most immigrants to a country with a preponderantly agricultural economy would engage in farming explains in part the collocation of the two heads of jurisdiction.”⁴ This “collocation” was not merely statutory; the government’s administrative apparatus for immigration

¹ McConnell, *Commentary on the British North America Act*, 2.

² *British North America Act, 1867*, 30-31 Victoria, Chapter 3, section 92(16).

³ *Confederation Debates, 1865*, 33. Quoted in McConnell, 139.

⁴ McConnell, 304.

remained a branch of the Department of Agriculture “from Confederation until the 14th March, 1892.”⁵ In his landmark study of the Canadian public service, J. E. Hodgetts noted that while “agricultural matters ... remained marginal until 1886, immigration engaged the full attention of the department until it was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1892.”⁶

Conflict between federal and provincial legislation can arise in various ways in a federal system, particularly over matters that are subject to concurrent jurisdiction. Where such conflict occurs, the constitutional doctrine of paramountcy operates to resolve it, by providing that federal legislation prevails in situations involving duplication or overlap. The federal government moved quickly, however, to prevent confusion in this area, and to establish its legislative pre-eminence under section 95. Following consultations with the provinces in 1868 to delineate federal and provincial roles,⁷ Canada’s first *Immigration Act* received royal assent on June 22, 1869 and was proclaimed in force on January 1, 1870. Jurisdictional conflict was averted, at least initially, as the provinces assumed a “generally auxiliary and recessive role ... in the immigration field.”⁸

Most provisions of *The Immigration Act, 1869* were designed to promote immigration and to protect immigrants while in transit and upon arrival in Canada. The Act imposed record-keeping requirements on ships’ captains, set limits on the number of passengers in proportion to the size of any transporting vessel, and imposed penalties for the carrying of any travellers not identified on passenger lists filed with customs officials at the port of departure. Recruiting agents acting on behalf of inland carriers in Canada were required to be licensed. Even tavern keepers in Canada were obliged to post their prices, to prevent the exploitation of new arrivals seeking accommodation.

⁵ *Memorandum to His Excellency The Governor General in Council: Historical Data, October 30, 1935*, LAC, Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 622, file 923954, reel 10440. The author of this document is identified as “FCB.” Frederick Charles Blair, a career civil servant, served as assistant deputy minister of agriculture from 1924 to 1936 and thereafter as Immigration Branch director until 1943. His relentlessly racist and anti-Semitic administration of Canadian immigration policy during that period has been thoroughly documented, particularly by Irving Abella and Harold Troper. (See Abella and Troper, “The line must be drawn somewhere,” and *None is Too Many*.) Branch memoranda issued by Blair (like this one) often included helpful chronological details about the history of immigration program administration, for the edification of his political masters.

⁶ Hodgetts, *The Canadian Public Service*, 100.

⁷ Provincial and federal representatives agreed that each could participate in the overseas recruitment of immigrants: “Ottawa would open an emigration office in London and one on the Continent, followed by other agencies as the need arose.” Similarly, provinces were “free to appoint their own agents as they saw fit”: Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 70.

⁸ McConnell, 306. This jurisdictional harmony appears to have been short-lived. McConnell reports more than twenty instances of provincial immigration legislation being overturned, either by the courts or by the Governor-General-in-Council (under disallowance powers contained in the constitution) between 1884 and 1908: McConnell, 307. Typically, such provisions sought to exclude particular groups from entering a province; disallowance was usually ordered because the provision in question had exceeded provincial authority.

The Act's preamble acknowledged the concurrent jurisdiction set out in the BNA Act, as well as the recently negotiated agreement regarding federal and provincial activities. Other provisions, however, demonstrated the government's intention to establish federal hegemony over immigration policy. The establishment of quarantine facilities and the conduct of medical examinations were to be federal responsibilities, as were all decisions in respect of "Lunatic, Idiotic, Deaf and Dumb, Blind or Infirm" immigrants, or those deemed "likely to become ... a public charge." Ottawa, not the provinces, would determine any additional payment or surety to be required in such cases, and make all decisions to refuse entry to these or other "destitute" travellers.⁹ In addition, one section foretold the future of policy administration in this field. While the Act did not explicitly confer upon the government the type of general 'regulation-making' power that characterized later legislation, it did include a provision authorizing the "Governor" (i.e. the cabinet) to prohibit the landing of paupers or destitute immigrants "by proclamation, wherever deemed necessary."¹⁰

The Immigration Act, 1869 remained in place, with few revisions, for thirty-five years.¹¹ Although intended to promote immigration, the Act was not particularly successful in that regard. Ironically, it was replaced in the early 1900s – in the midst of the country's greatest immigration influx – by legislation which began to control and restrict immigration rather than promote it. Canada's second *Immigration Act* was proclaimed in force in 1906, and was designed to respond to new priorities and political problems. As Kelley and Trebilcock explain, a massive post-1896 wave of immigration had generated widespread public concern, particularly in urban areas where "bleak working environments and appalling living conditions" were attributed to unskilled, uneducated, and uncouth immigrants from Britain and Eastern Europe.¹² A new Interior minister, Frank Oliver, replaced Clifford Sifton in 1905, and the revised legislation which quickly followed reflected Oliver's preference for a more restrictive immigration policy.

⁹ *The Immigration Act, 1869*, Statutes of Canada (S.C.) 1869, Ch. 10, sections 11 and 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, s. 16. Kelley and Trebilcock explain that this prohibition power was not widely exercised. The significance of section 16, therefore, was what it portended rather than what it accomplished. (Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 498n162.)

¹¹ Amendments to the Act in 1872 added "criminal or other vicious" immigrants to the prohibited classes listed in section 16. Other new sections prohibited the "seduction" of female immigrants, and established a process for the "Inquiry into complaints", by the Minister of Agriculture, "against any railway company or any incorporated company, for any offence or violation of this Act." From its wording, however, this new complaint provision appears designed to resolve disputes among carriers rather than to protect individual immigrants: S.C. 1872, Ch. 28, sections 6 and 11.

¹² Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 116-7.

The 1906 *Immigration Act* expanded the number of prohibited categories of immigrants, adding to the list the “insane,” the “feeble-minded,” and the “diseased,” as well as prostitutes and “beggars.”¹³ More importantly, racial origin would replace the occupational criteria which had been utilized to assess eligibility under the earlier legislation.¹⁴ Several new provisions encapsulated this important policy shift. First, the new section 10 explicitly authorized the Governor in Council “to make such orders and regulations ... necessary or expedient for the carrying out of this Act according to its true intent and meaning.” In other words, the statute now clearly empowered the government to implement immigration policy either by regulations promulgated under the Act or simply by way of administrative cabinet order. Either approach would ensure limited parliamentary oversight of immigration policy, and would enable the implementation of policy changes administratively, without the need for legislative amendment.

Other provisions in the 1906 statute suggested how this broad administrative discretion would be exercised. Section 30, for example, authorized cabinet “by proclamation or order ... [to] prohibit the landing in Canada of any specified class of immigrants.” Another new section empowered the government to “provide as a condition to permission to enter Canada that immigrants shall possess money to a prescribed minimum amount, which amount may vary according to the class and destination of such immigrants.”¹⁵ Orders-in-council exercising these statutory powers soon followed.

The extended period of legislative inactivity which followed passage of the 1869 *Immigration Act* was not repeated after 1906. Instead, another new Act followed only four years later. The 1910 *Immigration Act* has been described, somewhat euphemistically, as having “amplified” the provisions of its predecessor, primarily by incorporating regulatory rules that had been implemented since 1906.¹⁶ The ‘amplifications,’ however, were dramatic, beginning with further additions to the list of prohibited classes. One provision introduced a “continuous journey” criterion, creating a new test that could be applied in order to exclude certain ethnic groups.¹⁷ Another section augmented cabinet authority to impose landing taxes on immigrants, by stipulating that such fees could now “vary according to the race, occupation or destination” of the immigrant.¹⁸ For the first time, the Act explicitly authorized the government to deny entry to “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of ... any specified class, occupation or character.”¹⁹ Lastly, the Act’s

¹³ *Immigration Act*, S.C. 1906, Ch. 19, s. 26.

¹⁴ The 1869 statute required passenger lists to identify heads of family by, among other things, their “profession or trade”: *The Immigration Act, 1869*, section 5(2)

¹⁵ *Immigration Act*, S.C. 1906, Ch. 19, sections 20 and 30.

¹⁶ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 139.

¹⁷ *Immigration Act*, S.C. 1910, Ch. 27, section 38(a).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, section 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, section 38(c).

rudimentary appeals process – first introduced in 1872²⁰ – was substantially revised, as the “duties and procedures of boards of inquiry were ... expanded and more fully articulated.” Once again, however, these changes were not designed for the protection of individual immigrants, “who had no right to present evidence or to cross-examine on evidence prejudicial to [their] case,” or even to be present at the hearing of their appeal.²¹ Instead, the government’s unfettered authority over immigration policy and program administration was ‘clarified.’ In limited situations, the decision of a board of inquiry could be appealed to the minister. Otherwise, a statutory privative clause prohibited any further recourse to the courts other than for Canadian citizens or persons with Canadian domicile, a status which few immigrants could possibly have enjoyed.²²

In 1919, amendments to the 1910 statute extensively revised the legislation yet again. The list of ‘excluded’ classes was further expanded to include all persons who had been designated as “enemy aliens” during the First World War, as well as any who “believe in or advocate for the overthrow by force ... of the Government of Canada” or who “are members of or affiliated with any organization entertaining or teaching disbelief in or opposition to organized government.” Another new section specifically authorized the deportation of persons in this category, or any found to be advocating the overthrow of “constituted law and authority.”²³ These amendments effectively excluded, or subjected to deportation, persons from countries with which Canada had been at war, such as Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian states, including Ukraine. They were also directed toward those whom the government now considered “troublesome from a labour-relations perspective,”²⁴ including the organizers of the 1919 Winnipeg general strike.

The outburst of legislative activity between 1906 and 1919 has attracted relatively little scholarly attention. Historians have not seemed inclined to distinguish among the 1906, 1910, and 1919 enactments, but have tended to view them either as separate and distinct developments, or as loosely-connected components of an ongoing legislative initiative. Historian Julie Gilmour, for example, points to the 1906 Act as the beginning of “what became known as a ‘White Canada Immigration Policy.’”²⁵ By contrast, Alan Green identifies the 1910 *Immigration Act* as the legislative “landmark,” establishing a

²⁰ See footnote 10, above.

²¹ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 140.

²² *Immigration Act*, S.C. 1910, Ch. 27, sections 18-23.

²³ *An Act to Amend the Immigration Act*, S.C. 1919, Ch. 25, sections 3 and 15. ‘Enemy aliens’ had been the focus of other legislative actions during the war. The 1917 *War-Time Elections Act* disenfranchised “tens of thousands of immigrants” naturalized after 1902: English, *The Decline of Politics*, 153-4. One student of this period cites the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 as a particular genesis of wartime “enemy alien” hysteria: Boudreau, “*The Enemy Alien Problem in Canada, 1914-1921*,” 31-2.

²⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 185.

²⁵ Gilmour, “And who is my neighbour?” 162.

policy framework that would remain in place for decades.²⁶ To Donald Avery, the 1919 revisions seem most significant, demonstrating the “willingness of governments to avoid political controversy” as well as an accommodation to wartime “anti-alien hysteria.”²⁷ Similarly, Valerie Knowles describes the 1919 amendments, and the cabinet orders issued pursuant to them, as signalling a “dramatic shift” in immigration policy.²⁸

While these different emphases are not necessarily inaccurate, neither are they comprehensive. The 1910 and 1919 changes in particular responded to specific events and developments, such as the 1907 anti-Asian riots in Vancouver, racial antipathies fueled by World War One, and the economic recession and labour unrest which developed after the war. It was surely no coincidence that the 1910 *Immigration Act* followed closely an investigation into the causes of the Vancouver riots by the government’s ambitious deputy minister of labour, Mackenzie King. King’s report and recommendations demonstrated the kind of equivocal logic that would serve him well in future, intimating that the Asian communities victimized by the riots were somehow responsible for their own misfortune, and should in future be excluded from Canada on “humanitarian” grounds.²⁹ (King was elected to Parliament in 1908, and by 1909 he was in cabinet as the nation’s first-ever labour minister. His views on race were already well established and undoubtedly influenced the more restrictive 1910 legislation.³⁰)

The 1919 amendments, enacted amidst the turmoil of the Winnipeg general strike, also responded to immediate political and public pressures. They authorized the exclusion or deportation of immigrants coming from countries with whom Canada had been at war, or on grounds that they were radical ‘trouble-makers’ of the type believed responsible for postwar labour unrest. Further, in any case where ethnic or racial designations might not be sufficiently precise to ensure exclusion, admittance could be denied “by reason of any economic, industrial or other condition” in Canada, or “owing to ... peculiar customs,

²⁶ Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 14.

²⁷ Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 234.

²⁸ Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 135.

²⁹ Gilmour, *Trouble on Main Street*, 55-7; 110-1. See also W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever*: Ward quotes King’s report on the specific issue of Indian immigration. It recommended the “discontinuance of such immigration ... in the interests of the Indians themselves” (83). Curiously, Ward’s study of anti-Asian nativism in British Columbia barely acknowledges federal immigration legislation as a response to that phenomenon. His single reference to the 1910 Act suggests that “public opinion had little influence” on the statute, which was “merely a refinement of existing law and took its origins from within the civil service.” (Ward, 183n67)

³⁰ Evidently, immigration policy was not always a matter of cabinet unanimity. An entry in King’s diary describes a discussion at which ministers considered demands by railway companies for more foreign construction workers. “Oliver,” King recorded, “is strong in his opposition to labour being brought into the country ... that ultimately is not going to be of service for settlement, & favours making restrictions on virtually all save northern people of Europe. I agree with him, but we are about alone in this, others preferring to see Ry. [i.e. railway] work hurried”: LAC, *King Diary*, January 10, 1911. (This passage is quoted in Kelley and Trebilcock, 119-20.)

habits, modes of life and methods of holding property.”³¹ The effect of these revisions was to empower the government, by regulation and order-in-council, to catalogue immigrant groups into ‘preferred’ and ‘non-preferred’ classes, on the basis of ethnicity, perceived political inclination, or any other “condition,” and to exclude them on any basis which the government, in its sole discretion, deemed applicable.

The legislative foundation for immigration policy over the next four decades was thus firmly in place by 1919. The development of an accompanying regulatory and administrative framework continued apace. Subordinate legislation, in the form of regulations, is essential to the administration of any statutory regime. “It is beyond possibility,” John Kersell explains, “that Parliament should control in detail all the administrative, regulative and other activities of government.”³² Authority to establish administrative procedures and policy by regulation is typically delegated by statute to cabinet or to individual ministers, thereby ensuring that “within assigned limits, the body [i.e. the cabinet] can flexibly apply law or policy.”³³ Subordinate legislation, at least in principle, allows for the establishment of a workable administrative framework to ensure delivery of a statutory program in accordance with the general intent and purpose of the governing statute. There are drawbacks, however. As Hodgetts explains, such delegated authority can burden cabinet members with administrative matters and distract them from pursuing “the main policy goals of the nation.”³⁴ This would become a recurring concern among later immigration ministers.

It is unclear when the government began to issue regulations under its immigration legislation. As noted earlier, *The Immigration Act, 1869* delegated a limited regulatory power to the government. At that time, however, there was no requirement for government to publish regulations or orders-in-council issued under such delegated authority, or even to table them in Parliament. (As Kersell explains, in Canada “developments in regard to parliamentary supervision of the use of delegated legislative powers ... lagged far behind” other Commonwealth nations. Britain, for example, established the practice of publication in the nineteenth century.³⁵) The *General Index* of Parliamentary Sessional Papers for the period 1867-1876 shows no entries for regulations or orders under the subject of immigration. The subsequent volume, covering the period 1877-1890, references only a few, and most are described as not

³¹ S.C. 1919, Ch. 25, section 13.

³² Kersell, *Parliamentary Supervision of Delegated Legislation*, 1.

³³ McConnell, *Commentary on the British North America Act*, 45.

³⁴ Hodgetts, *The Canadian Public Service*, 51.

³⁵ Kersell, *Parliamentary Supervision of Delegated Legislation*, 158-63. In Canada, the “publication and laying” of regulations before Parliament was not consistently practiced until World War Two; the legal requirement to do so was implemented in 1947 (ironically, by an order-in-council, P.C 3605/1949 under the obscure *Public Printing and Stationery Act*). A *Regulations Act* followed in 1950.

having been printed.³⁶ Later indexes reference administrative orders more frequently, but often indicate that they were not printed or published in the *Canada Gazette*, a practice which became mandatory in later times.

By the early 1900s, the use of orders-in-council to establish administrative policy had become more frequent. On July 23, 1900, Order-in-Council P.C. 1851/1900 prohibited the landing of pauper or destitute immigrants in any Canadian port of entry “until such sums of money as are found necessary are provided” to local immigration authorities.³⁷ (Curiously, and unlike the 1880 order issued under the same authority, the 1900 order-in-council did not stipulate an amount required.) One month later, Order-in-Council P.C. 2062/1900 exercised the authority granted in the 1872 amendments to the Act, by “prohibiting the landing in Canada of criminals or vicious immigrants from any European or Asiatic Port.”³⁸ A third order-in-council, P.C 1293/1902, issued on August 15, 1902, prohibited “the landing in Canada absolutely of any immigrant or other passenger who is suffering from any loathsome, dangerous or infectious disease.”³⁹

One characteristic shared by these orders-in-council was a tendency to extend administrative policy to the limit of the authority delegated by the governing statute. It will be recalled that the 1869 Act, as amended in 1872,⁴⁰ empowered the government to prohibit the landing of destitute immigrants unless payment was made for their care and transportation. Implicit in that statutory provision was a requirement that any regulation issued thereunder would stipulate an amount of money to be charged in that circumstance. In the 1880 regulation⁴¹, the government set the amount at \$20. However, in P.C. 1851/1900, which extended the prohibition of indigent immigrants from Halifax and to all ports of entry, no amount was stipulated. The result was to provide immigration officials with absolute discretion to ban any immigrants found to be “indigent,” regardless of whether they brought funds to support themselves.⁴²

³⁶ *General Index to the Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada and of the Sessional Papers of Parliament, From 1877-1890, inclusive*, Ottawa, 1891. One early Order-in-Council that is extant is P.C. 74/1880. Issued under section 16 of *The Immigration Act, 1869*, this order prohibited the landing of “pauper or destitute immigrants in the Port of Halifax” pending payment of “the sum of twenty dollars at least for each ... for his or her temporary support and transport to place of destination.” LAC, RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-1-a, Volume 387, Reel C-3328. This item, and those cited in footnotes 37 through 39 and 42, below, were accessed online at www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/orders/001022-100.01-e.php, on December 19, 2016.

³⁷ LAC, RG 2, Privy Council Minutes, Series 1, Volume 843.

³⁸ P.C. 2062/1900, August 23, 1900, LAC, Privy Council Minutes, RG 2, Series 1, Volume 848.

³⁹ P.C. 1293/1902, August 15, 1902, LAC, RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-1-d, volume 843. The 1869 Act did not authorize the exclusion of ‘diseased’ immigrants. A legislative amendment was therefore required before a regulation prohibiting admission on that basis could be established, which explains the later proclamation date for this order: See *An Act to amend the Immigration Act*, S.C. 1902, Ch. 14.

⁴⁰ See footnote 11, above.

⁴¹ See footnote 36, above.

⁴² A 1908 regulation restored landing charges, increasing them substantially from the 1880 amounts: P.C. 28/1908.

P.C. 2062/1900 showed a similar tendency to stretch the authority delegated by the Act. The 1872 amendments had added “criminal or other vicious classes” (a category which surely defied precise description) to the categories of immigrants subject to administrative exclusion. The subsequent order-in-council simply repeated the statutory language, excluding “criminals and vicious immigrants” without clarification as to how these characteristics would be determined. The 1902 order barring immigrants afflicted with “loathsome diseases” reflected the same concerns that motivated the earlier regulations, referring in its preamble to “the large numbers of immigrants who are now coming from foreign countries to Canada and to the United States via Canadian ports.” It also, like the other orders, granted absolute discretion to “the Minister of the Interior or officer to whom he entrusts the matter” to exercise that authority.⁴³

It is clear that the early 1900s saw the formation of an approach to immigration policy that would endure beyond the mid-twentieth century. Statutory regulations, passed by way of orders-in council, allowed the government to quickly address concerns raised by high levels of immigration, through expanded and often vaguely defined prohibited immigrant “classes.” Regulations, however, cannot exceed the authority that is delegated by the legislation under which they are promulgated, and must also reflect – in the words of the 1906 *Immigration Act* – the true “intent and meaning” of the governing statute. The new *Immigration Acts* of 1906 and 1910, and the amendments of 1919, demonstrated a sense of urgency not only to establish policy by way of administrative order, but also to ensure that the statutory language was sufficiently broad to allow for the kind of unfettered administrative discretion that was contemplated for this policy area. Kelley and Trebilcock may exaggerate slightly when they note that some prohibitions contained in the 1906 Act had been “passed in earlier orders-in-council”⁴⁴ (since regulations cannot be issued before they are permitted by statute). However, there is little doubt that the substantial legislative revisions during the period reveal a distinctive pattern whereby legislators strove to ensure that the legislation remained sufficiently broad in its wording to permit the administrative procedures being established under it.

New regulations followed each statutory revision, continuing at times to extend legislative “intent and meaning” to their utmost. A January 1908 regulation⁴⁵ implemented the “continuous journey”

⁴³ P.C 1293/1902, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 510n113.

⁴⁵ P.C. 27/1908, LAC Privy Council Office, Series A-1-a, Vol. 942. Accessed at www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/orders/001022-100.01-e.php. on December 30, 2016. In this case, the statute was not amended to authorize the ‘continuous journey’ exclusion until April 10, 1908, some four months after the order-in-council had been issued; see *An Act to amend the Immigration Act*, S.C. 1908, Ch. 33, section 1. Section 30 of the 1906 Act had simply provided a general authority to cabinet to prohibit “by proclamation or

restriction that had been added to the 1906 Act as a tool for the exclusion of certain ethnic groups. The subterfuge in this provision was obvious; prospective immigrants from Asia or India, in particular, would find it impossible to travel to Canada “by a continuous journey and on through tickets purchased before leaving the country of their birth, or citizenship.”⁴⁶ American or British travellers, by contrast, could easily meet those criteria. In its preamble, the regulation also conspicuously declared the redress of “conditions of over supply of labour at certain seasons”⁴⁷ to be an important purpose of the 1906 Act. Although economic factors were, and would remain, important components of immigration policy, no language in the 1906 statute suggested a connection between labour market conditions and the “intent and meaning” of the *Immigration Act*.

A period of heightened regulatory activity followed the conclusion of World War One and the 1919 amendments to the *Immigration Act*, and continued into the mid-1920s. First, a series of orders-in-council, issued in rapid succession by the Union and Conservative governments between 1919 and 1921, targeted not only the radical immigrants believed to have instigated the Winnipeg strike, but also various ethnic groups against whom resentment had grown during wartime. Groups such as Doukhobors, Hutterites, and Mennonites were now excluded completely, while others were subject to prohibitive landing fees⁴⁸. Likewise, immigrants now identified as “enemy aliens” by the 1919 amendments were now excluded.⁴⁹ Several years later, as tensions eased and economic conditions improved, many of these restrictions were reversed through subsequent regulations. In 1926, Order-in-Council P.C. 534/1926 effectively reopened the nation’s borders to immigration, citing a renewed need for labour.

As the legislative and regulatory frameworks evolved, a third foundational component of immigration policy also emerged, as the government constructed an administrative infrastructure and implemented operational procedures to direct those entrusted with the implementation of policy. Some elements of this administrative sphere were readily visible to the public, while others remained inward-facing and internal to government. A review of the materials in this area that remain available reveals much about evolving immigration policy from the early years of the program. Initially, departmental

order” the landing of “any specified class of immigrants.” While this language may have been sufficiently broad, the subsequent statutory amendment suggested that the government feared that it was not.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2. Peter Ward confirms that the provision was directed primarily at Indian and Japanese immigrants: “There being no direct steamship line from India, virtually all Indian immigration was thus eliminated. At the same time the door was shut on the Hawaiian route for Japanese immigrants.” See Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 75-6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸ Numerous orders encapsulated these restrictions. Hutterites, Doukhobors, and Mennonites were barred under Order P.C. 923/1919 (May 1, 1919) and Order P.C. 1204/1919 (June 9, 1919). Of these, P.C. 1204/1919 was published: *Canada Gazette*, Vol. 52 Apr.-June 1919, 3824. For an example of the imposition of landing fees, see Order P.C. 2668/1921 (July 26, 1921) *Canada Gazette*, Vol. 55 July-Sept. 1921, 1175.

⁴⁹ Order-in-Council P.C. 1203/1919 (June 9, 1919) *Canada Gazette*, Vol. 52 Apr.-June 1919, 3825.

reports by immigration officials described infrastructure projects undertaken following passage of *The Immigration Act, 1869*, but otherwise confined themselves to statistical summaries.⁵⁰ By the early 1900s, however, as immigration policy grew more complicated the reports became more nuanced, but also more revealing. In its 1907 annual report to Parliament, the Department of the Interior proudly noted that the previous year's intake of 189,064 immigrants was "the largest in the history of Canada." Then, in language that disclosed the true motivation behind Canada's immigration policy, it continued:

The one aim and well established policy of the department during the past few years has been to make Canada better known in the outside world, so as to attract capitalists and desirable settlers to develop her vast natural resources. That this policy has been productive of the desired results is amply demonstrated by the fact that during the past ten years 832,606 persons landed in Canada from every part of the world; of these 584,356 came from the British Isles and the United States.⁵¹

The irony in these lines may well have been lost on the dutiful bureaucrats who drafted them. (The new 1906 *Immigration Act* was designed to restrict immigration or at least to provide the government with the means to do so, and was enacted in response to growing public objection to current immigration levels, albeit from non-British sources.) "The time would appear most opportune," the report cheerfully concluded, "for continuing with increased vigour the propaganda which has been conducted in Great Britain during the past few years."⁵² The real policy goal may have been the promotion of immigration, but only from preferred sources – Great Britain and the United States.

Annual departmental reports presented a consistently optimistic picture, even as immigration levels declined with the approach of war. Although overall immigration fell to 208,794 in 1910, the Deputy Minister's 1911 report still emphasized an increase in the number of British immigrants, reassuring readers of the program's success in its efforts "to attract all desirable classes" from Great Britain.⁵³ Special praise was reserved for "the new regulations," which the report credited as a "source of protection against certain undesirable classes" which might otherwise have been admitted. Here was the language of the skilled bureaucrat, simultaneously affirming the political acuity in the recent statutory revisions and his own department's resounding success in administering them.

⁵⁰ See, for example, "Report of the Minister of Agriculture for 1871" in *Sessional Papers*, Vol. 2, Fifth Session of the First Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1872, No. 2A. This report described the construction of "large and commodious" immigration stations underway at Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, and in "the new Province of Manitoba," but otherwise primarily summarized statistics on immigrant arrivals for the year (65,722) and expenditures on immigration by the government (\$133,612.28) both at home and abroad.

⁵¹ "Report of the Deputy Minister of the Interior" in *Sessional Papers* 1906-7, Vol 41, No. 10, Sessional Paper No. 25, xxxi.

⁵² *Ibid.*, xxxi.

⁵³ "Report of the Deputy Minister W.W. Cory", *Sessional Papers* 1911, Vol 45, No. 16, Sessional Paper No. 25, xxviii.

Subsequent annual reports of the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Immigration and Colonization (which succeeded it in 1917) grew increasingly political and self-congratulatory in tone. The high “quality” of immigrants coming from Britain,⁵⁴ and the vigorous enforcement of exclusionary rules were consistently celebrated. Readers were reassured of evidence “that a considerable percentage of immigration continues to turn to agricultural pursuits.”⁵⁵ Border security received particular emphasis after the war, as Immigration Branch officials described “extra vigilance and care” by field officers in preventing the entry of “undesirable classes” in the war’s aftermath.⁵⁶ By extensive amendment and numerous regulatory orders, the *Immigration Act* had been transformed into enforcement legislation, and enforcement meant increased resources and an expanded bureaucracy. Invariably the reports included little data about growth in the size of the bureaucracy, or its attendant costs. However, reassurances of the efficient and effective deployment of those resources became a prominent theme of the government’s annual program reports.⁵⁷ The relatively low – and declining – annual number of deportations was also cited as evidence of the program’s success.⁵⁸

The final foundational component to immigration policy was comprised of innumerable internal directives, memoranda, and bulletins issued from the earliest days of the program. Essential to the delivery of any statutory enforcement regime, these materials are ordinarily prepared for the instruction and guidance of program staff, and are seldom intended to be made public. Accordingly, they often disclose information or concerns not evident in other published materials, or policy directions not discernible in the governing legislation. Surviving Immigration Branch files from the early twentieth century provide several noteworthy examples.

One particularly revealing Interior Department memorandum, dated June 4, 1909, began with an acknowledgement that the current *Immigration Act* had undergone “several” recent amendments, raising

⁵⁴ “Report of A.F. Jury to Assistant Superintendent of Emigration for Canada, London”, *Sessional Papers 1911*, Vol. 45, No. 16, 75.

⁵⁵ “Report of the Deputy Minister of the Interior 1912-13”, *Sessional Papers 1914*, Vol. 48, No. 19, Sessional Paper No. 25, xi.

⁵⁶ “Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization 1919-20”, *Sessional Papers 1921*, Vol. 57, No. 6, Sessional Paper No. 18, 28.

⁵⁷ In his 1921 report, acting deputy minister W.W. Cory exalted “the work on the ground” of Immigration Branch officers during the preceding year, especially their fastidious “checking at the boundary” of prospective immigrants. “Had it not been for this,” he concluded ominously, “no one can tell what internal happenings might have occurred as the result of the immigration of a class of people whose whole aim and purpose was to disseminate strife and foment trouble.” (*Ibid.*, 30.) No further details were provided, but the allusion to recent labour unrest and the regulations enacted in response to it was unmistakable.

⁵⁸ “The enforcement of these regulations has had the effect of reducing the deportation of immigrants of all nationalities from 1,748 in 1908-9 to 784 in 1910-11.” “Report of the Deputy Minister,” *Sessional Papers 1912*, Vol. 46, No. 17, Sessional Paper No. 25, xxxii.

the “possibility of misunderstanding” of its exclusionary provisions on the part of the steamship and railway companies involved in the transport of immigrants. Under the circumstances, the document continued, it was “advisable” to summarize the government’s current immigration policy “as shortly and plainly although informally as possible.” The following principles were then enunciated:

1. Money is expended and administration is exercised with the object of securing immigrants whose purpose in life is to occupy farm lands, either as owners, tenants, or labourers.
2. Money is voted and administration is exercised with the object of excluding those whose presence in Canada would tend to add to the congestion of our towns and cities.

Immigration effort is made in those countries which are considered most likely to furnish the people coming within the first of the two classes above specified.

No immigration effort is made in those countries which are considered likely to furnish the people coming within the second class.

The memorandum continued, summarizing the various “exclusion provisions” applicable to “the physically, mentally or morally unfit,” and to those disqualified “for financial or other reasons.”⁵⁹ The message was clear: exclusionary criteria and rules were essential policy components, and they were to be strictly applied.

Neither the authorship nor the intended audience for this early policy summary can be determined. Its first page shows only its date and title. With photocopying technology still in the distant future, it was almost certainly not intended for general distribution among program staff, as would later become common practice. More likely, it served to remind senior immigration officials of the program’s guiding principles as they traveled or communicated with field offices. The document’s current location, among records from the 1920s and later, suggests both its importance when it was prepared and its continued relevance thereafter. A decade later, several program bulletins – now issued more frequently and identified as “official circulars,” – repeated the 1909 guidelines almost verbatim.⁶⁰

Over time, Immigration Branch bulletins and circulars assumed the character of modern bureaucratic program materials, addressing general administrative issues and more specific concerns. A 1919 circular exhorted inspectors at all Canadian border ports to “keep a sharp lookout” for any travellers who might be “Revolutionists or aliens of the Bolshevik persuasion, including I.W.W. workers.”⁶¹ Later,

⁵⁹ *In Re Exclusion of Over-Seas Immigrants, Department of the Interior, Canada, 4th June, 1909*. LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Volume 624, file 947852, pt. 1, Reel C10440.

⁶⁰ *Official Circular No. 4, January 1, 1919* reproduced the 1909 document almost exactly, as did *Official Circular No. 8*, which appears to have been issued in May 1919: LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Volume 624, file 947852, pt. 1, reel C10440. The file contains several other subsequent iterations of the same material.

⁶¹ *Official Circular No. 10, November 21, 1919*, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 624, file 947852, pt. 1. “I.W.W.” referred to the International Workers of the World, the union founded in the United States in 1905.

a 1928 circular from immigration commissioner Arthur Joliffe meticulously closed an administrative loophole in respect of “applicants” entering Canada in order to comply with outstanding criminal arrest warrants. Previous procedures had provided for the detention of individuals arriving in such situations, but allowed for their release if acquitted at trial. Henceforth, however, deportation was to be automatic even for those found not guilty. Immigration officials were furnished with special “detention orders” for use in this scenario, and directed to “at all times have a number of blank copies ... available for use on short notice.” (In the event of a conviction, the order would conveniently become “null and void,” since existing statutory provisions were sufficient to ensure deportation.⁶²) Evidently, neither immigration officers nor those charged with the development of program policy during these years were encumbered by legal principles such as the presumption of innocence or procedural fairness.

These procedural directives demonstrated an acceleration in the trend, noted above, toward expanded and unfettered administrative discretion over immigration policy. The 1919 amendments had sought to exclude wartime “enemy aliens,” persons “opposed to organized government”, and those seeking to “overthrow by force or violence the Government of Canada.”⁶³ However, the procedural direction to border staff, specifically referring to “Bolsheviks” and “I.W.W. workers,” surely exceeded any ordinary interpretation of that statutory language. Similarly, requiring the automatic deportation of immigrants who had been acquitted of criminal charges defied sensible application of the statutory provision which excluded “criminals.”⁶⁴

In later years, procedural directives issued to program staff by Joliffe and his successor, Frederick Blair, sometimes demonstrated greater political acuity, but retained their vigorous approach to administering the statute’s exclusionary provisions. In one circular, Joliffe warned officers to be particularly vigilant in “the examination of families coming forward under non-immigration status where the head of the family is remaining in the United States,” a scenario in which the Department might be manipulated into admitting unsuitable applicants, or alternatively seen as “the instrument of separating the family permanently” if the dependents were unable to return.⁶⁵ In another circular, apparently his last as Commissioner of Immigration, Joliffe called for “better handling” of cases of rejection, following

⁶² Official Circular No. 28, December 11, 1928, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 624, file 947852, pt. 1.

⁶³ S.C. 1919, Ch. 25, sections 3 and 15.

⁶⁴ By this time, the statutory language excluding “criminal” immigrants had actually been narrowed from its earlier “criminal and vicious” terminology. The current provisions excluded only “persons who have been convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude,” and those involved in prostitution: S.C. 1910, Ch. 19, subsections 3(d)-(f). Quite simply, *Official Circular No. 28*, appears to have had no statutory foundation.

⁶⁵ *Official Circular No. 34*, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 624, file 947852, pt. 1. This document is undated but was probably issued some time before the Immigration Branch was placed in the Department of Mines and Resources in 1936.

incidents where an elderly traveller and a small child – both intending to visit relatives – were turned away. Ever defiant, Joliffe concluded: “While rejection in both cases was right, the method of handling was wrong and inspection officers must always keep in mind that special cases call for special treatment.”⁶⁶ Gradually, sensitivity toward the political dangers presented by immigration was increasing.⁶⁷

Not all policy developed within the immigration bureaucracy focused on exclusion. The archival record also documents initiatives undertaken during periods when the government sought to encourage immigration, particularly during the mid-1920s. Federal-provincial conferences discussed joint initiatives to publicize and promote immigration in Britain and the United States, shared best practices on intake from various regions,⁶⁸ and lamented the ongoing challenge in getting the desired “class” of settlers. “The free homestead lands,” one report noted, “are no longer an attraction ... when limited [as in some provinces] to one hundred and sixty acres.”⁶⁹ Minutes of these proceedings proudly documented numerous promotional activities: advertising campaigns; topical publications extolling various regions or helpful topics like *Women’s Work in Canada*; and the distribution of “some three hundred and fifty thousand copies” of a Canadian atlas to British schoolchildren. Conference attendees even imagined a future in which “motion picture publicity” might reach “20,000,000 viewers per week with movie images and ads.”⁷⁰ Elsewhere, correspondence between the Immigration Branch, Canadian railway companies, and the Government of Switzerland documented a scheme to colonize several hundred Swiss farming families to British Columbia in 1936-7.⁷¹ (Blair, ever cautious and precise, actually supported the project.) These promotional initiatives, however, were never recounted with the same enthusiasm as was generated by policy discussions concerning enforcement techniques or exclusion.

Few policy issues appear to have eluded Blair’s watchful gaze as he consolidated his bureaucratic fiefdom. A 1936 proposal to incorporate his Immigration Branch into a reorganized department of

⁶⁶ *Department of Mines and Resources Official Circular No. 37*, October 15, 1937, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 624, file 947852, pt.2.

⁶⁷ Around 1931 or 1932, the government appointed one R.J.C. Stead as ‘Director of Publicity’ for the Department of Immigration and Colonization: *The Canada Year Book*, 1932, 162.

⁶⁸ *Report on Federal-Provincial Conference on Immigration and Colonization, November 1923*, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 625, file 951760, pt. 3, Reel C 10,441.

⁶⁹ *Report of Immigration Publicity Conference, December 7 and 8, 1920*, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 625, file 625, pt. 2, Reel C 10,441, 17-8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-5; 16.

⁷¹ I found no other historical reference to this particular initiative, which seems most noteworthy for its timing, given that a 1931 Order-in-Council had effectively closed Canadian borders to immigration throughout the Depression (although one of its exceptions applied to ‘agriculturalists’). Blair, however, was by this time at the height of his exclusionary powers, as his relentless and successful opposition to the admission of Jewish refugees during this period clearly demonstrated; see Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*.

“Mines, Resources and Colonization” elicited a lengthy – and apparently unsolicited – submission from Blair to his minister T.A. Crerar. “While the name Colonization has been carried around since 1917,” Blair lectured, “it has never meant much because the Department has never really been actively engaged in colonization.” The lesson continued: “We administer the Immigration Act not the Immigration and Colonization Act. The Act relates entirely to immigration and that is the chief, in fact almost the only, function the Department has.” For this reason “amongst others,” Blair concluded, removing immigration from the department’s title would be “a great pity.”⁷² Evidently the argument succeeded, at least in part. Later that year, an Order-in-Council divided the Department of Mines and Resources into five branches, including the “Immigration Branch.”⁷³

Although many policy details were kept from public view, it is evident that neither embarrassment nor shame were the reason. *The Canada Year Book*, the government’s yearly almanac of statistics and important developments, made no secret of the racial biases that informed immigration policy throughout the early 1900s. The 1914 edition, for example, unabashedly reviewed various initiatives to restrict Chinese, Japanese, and “Hindu” immigration. “Canada has consistently followed a policy of exclusion with regard to immigration from oriental countries,” the publication explained. For Chinese immigrants, there were “head taxes,” first imposed in 1885, and increased from their original level of \$50 to \$500 by 1903.⁷⁴ Japanese immigration had required a different approach. Following the 1907 Vancouver race riots, negotiations between Canada and Japan led to the enactment of regulations by the Japanese government “for the restriction of emigration from Japan to Canada.” As a result, Japanese immigration “though annually increasing from 1910 to 1914, has been kept within bounds, the number in 1907-08 being 856, and in 1914-15, 592.”⁷⁵ A disturbing increase in “Hindu” immigration levels had been successfully addressed by the regulations imposing continuous-journey and other “money qualifications” criteria. As a result, “from 1909 to 1913 the number of Hindu immigrants did not exceed 12 annually.”⁷⁶ In general, the *Year Book* reassured its readers, the regulatory program of exclusionary rules had “greatly improved” the overall “standard of quality” of immigrants since 1900.

⁷² *Memorandum: Hon. T.A. Crerar*, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 622, file 923954, Reel 10440.

⁷³ P.C 2396/1936, LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, Vol. 622, file 923954, Reel 10440. This Order-in-Council went on to appoint Frederick Charles Blair Director of the Immigration Branch. (The number of this order is not clearly legible and may have been 0396/1936.)

⁷⁴ *The Canada Year Book 1914*, 678. The Chinese head tax program was both an effective exclusionary tool and a source of revenue: “Chinese immigrants have increased from 1,884 in 1908 to 7,445 in 1913 and 5,512 in 1914. For the year ended March 31, 1914, the revenue for the Chinese head tax amounted to \$2,637,000, which is more than the amount expended upon immigration in the same period.” *Ibid.*, 678.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 678.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 678-9. The *Year Book* documented one close call in 1914 when a desperate group of Hindu migrants attempted “to test the efficacy of the Canadian laws restricting oriental immigration.” A few passengers aboard

Subsequent *Year Books* continued to celebrate program successes in restricting immigration from ‘undesirable’ sources. The 1919 edition explained the recent measures implemented to exclude “Anarchists,”⁷⁷ and in later years, measures to exclude various ethnic groups – “Asiatics”, “East Indians,” and “Eastern Europeans” – were reviewed in detail almost annually. While no effort was made to deny race as a frequent basis for exclusion, the explanations could still be disingenuous. The exclusion of Indians, one *Year Book* acknowledged, had caused embarrassment at several Imperial conferences “because of its reaction on the loyalty of the Indian peoples to the Empire.” In response to the criticism, “it was pointed out that the reasons for existing restrictions were purely economic and did not involve the inferiority of those restricted.”⁷⁸ Elsewhere, economic rationalizations proved more useful: “The immigration ... of labourers belonging to the Asiatic races, able because of their low standard of living to underbid the white man in selling their labour, is fundamentally an economic rather than a racial problem.”⁷⁹ Later accounts conveniently incorporated the language of the 1919 amendments, justifying the exclusion of “southern and Eastern European” groups simply because they were “less readily assimilated.”⁸⁰

Some scholars have noted with admiration the ‘flexibility’ of Canada’s immigration policy framework as it evolved in the early twentieth century. Economist Alan Green theorizes (as did Mabel Timlin before him) that a small nation like Canada “must be able to adjust [its] policies to offset or cushion the impact of alterations in ... demand for its products.” Orders-in-council offered the ideal “legislative device” to implement specific restrictions based on immediate economic or political concerns, and to quickly remove those restrictions when conditions changed.⁸¹ To others, however, this ‘flexible’ system was extremely troubling: secretive, undemocratic, and removed from Parliamentary oversight. Reflecting on an administrative framework still in place in the 1950s, D.C. Corbett noted that “the Act gives the Cabinet a vaguely defined and all-embracing power to make regulations excluding people on various grounds.” To Corbett, this revealed a mindset that “prefers the system of ministerial

the *Komagata Maru* satisfied officials that they were returning to Canada, and were allowed to land. The rest, however, were refused admission. “Some amount of rioting took place, but eventually the Hindus were induced to desist from their attempts to land, and the sailing of the ship from Vancouver on July 23 closed the matter so far as Canada was concerned.” (Ibid., 679.) This confidence that the matter had been finally resolved would eventually prove to be premature.

⁷⁷ *The Canada Year Book 1919*, 647.

⁷⁸ *The Canada Year Book, 1921*, 15. Reactions among Canada’s Imperial allies to such dissembling can only be surmised. A 1917 Imperial War Conference resolution affirmed the right of all Commonwealth governments “including India” to restrict immigration “from any of the other communities.” This ‘solution’ – a declaration that all members were entitled to discriminate – likely offered scant comfort to India, but demonstrated that hypocrisy on this issue was not exclusive to Canada.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰ *Canada Year Book, 1927-28*, 191.

⁸¹ Green, *Canadian Postwar Immigration Policy*, 16; 225.

responsibility to any system which makes immigration procedure a matter of legal rights.”⁸² Reginald Whitaker attributes more sinister motivations than mere administrative expediency, as he decries the “racism” that animated immigration policy before World War Two, and a “new,” more ideological approach to discrimination “born with the Cold War.”⁸³

The distinguishing characteristic of the immigration framework was indeed its flexibility. As conditions changed or particular issues arose, the nation’s doors could quickly be opened or closed by issuing or rescinding cabinet orders. By 1923, the *Canada Year Book* confirmed that “most of the restrictive regulations have now been cancelled,”⁸⁴ in response to improving economic conditions. A 1926 order allowed “the entry under permit of any immigrant ‘whose labour or service’ was required in Canada,”⁸⁵ thus removing the last remaining barriers to Eastern European immigrants. New promotional strategies appeared during the brief ‘open’ period which ensued. Agreements with railway and steamship companies subsidized transportation costs and divested responsibility for recruitment activities as well. New “assisted passage” programs appeared, culminating in a 1926 “Empire Settlement Agreement [which] provided ocean passage, third class from any Port in the United Kingdom to Halifax, Saint John or Quebec [for a fare of 3 pounds].”⁸⁶ The immigration bureaucracy continued to grow, although details about its actual size remained vague. By 1925, the post-war Soldier Settlement Board had become the Land Settlement Branch of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, dedicated to ensuring that “new settlers are directed to lands where they can have the best opportunities of success and to safeguard them from exploitation in the purchase of their farms.”⁸⁷ As the 1920s drew to a close, the disruptions of war and a faltering postwar economy seemed to have been surmounted. “It is expected that 1929 will see a considerable increase in British immigrants,” the *Year Book* predicted, “especially those of the assisted classes.”⁸⁸

Economic depression, however, brought another reversal in policy direction. A March 1931 order-in-council, P.C. 695/1931 barred “the landing in Canada of immigrants of all classes and occupations,” except for British and American citizens and their families, or “agriculturalists having sufficient means to farm in Canada,” (the only remaining avenue for non-Anglo-Saxons).⁸⁹ This Order

⁸² Corbett, *Canada’s Immigration Policy*, 87; 178.

⁸³ Whitaker, *Double Standard*, 24.

⁸⁴ *Canada Year Book*, 1922-23, 214. The passage continues, with remarkable understatement, to acknowledge that decades of exclusionary regulations had “created in the minds of many people outside of Canada some doubt as to their welcome in the Dominion.”

⁸⁵ Order-in-Council P.C. 534/1926, quoted in Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 199.

⁸⁶ *Canada Year Book*, 1927-28, 205.

⁸⁷ *Canada Year Book* 1925, 186.

⁸⁸ *Canada Year Book*, 1929, 201.

⁸⁹ Order-in-Council P.C.695/1931, LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, Vol. 255, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954.

would remain in force, with occasional minor amendments, until November 1947. It has been accurately described as the culmination of a “process of exclusion by legislation” begun in 1906.⁹⁰ Canada’s immigration doors would remain all but closed throughout the 1930s and until the end of the Second World War.⁹¹ The Order provided a convenient legal basis to refuse even the desperate entreaties made on behalf of Jewish refugees in 1938-9. New concerns, moreover, exacerbated old problems. Jews were not ‘agriculturalists’ and they were certainly not British. Unquestionably their rejection was “strongly influenced by Canadian assumptions about Jewish immigrants,”⁹² but economic concerns also contributed. Writing in 1937, economist K.W. Taylor expressed the prevailing depression-era economic thinking on the “problem” of immigration:

The prevailing rate of natural increase being so close to the normal absorptive capacity of the country, the renewal of a policy of large-scale immigration can hardly be justified. Acceleration of the post-war [i.e. post-1918] rate of increase can only be achieved by a considerable reduction in the material standard of life or by a complete change in the basis of the Canadian economy. In large areas of Canada, soil and climate are such that a peasant economy would be possible. But that would involve changes in habits of thought and living and in scales of values that can hardly come in the calculable future.⁹³

The biases about race, ethnicity, and class which informed much of Canada’s early immigration policy were not solely attributable to bureaucrats and politicians. They reflected ideas that were prevalent throughout the country. Correspondence received by the prime minister’s office offered unique insight. Following his return to power in 1935, Mackenzie King’s meticulously organized correspondence files showed continuing and widespread opposition to immigration from all regions, and from both English and French Canada. In 1935 and 1936, the Montreal and Kitchener city councils each forwarded resolutions opposing any pro-immigration measures. Both cited economic factors to support their argument, an approach that might be expected given that welfare and unemployment support were

⁹⁰ Gilmour, ““And Who Is My Neighbour?”” 162. P.C. 695/1931 was repealed and replaced on November 26, 1947 by an order-in-council which incorporated all revisions into an updated, but otherwise identical regulation: P.C. 4849/1947, *Canada Gazette Pt. II*, Vol. 81, Ottawa: 1947, 1149-50.

⁹¹ In 1931, 27,530 immigrants entered Canada, a significant decline from the annual average of over 134,000 between 1923 and 1930. Thereafter the decline continued precipitously, to a low of 7,576 in 1942: Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 260.

⁹² Gilmour, ““And who is my Neighbour?”” 163.

⁹³ Taylor, “The Economic Bases of Canadian Foreign Policy,” 104.

provincial and municipal concerns.⁹⁴ Organizations advocating on behalf of various business and community interests made similar submissions.⁹⁵

Correspondence from less mainstream organizations, or from individuals, was often more strident in tone and reflected racial animosities rather than economic concerns. In particular, letters to the prime minister from fringe groups and anti-Semitic individuals were extreme in their lack of sympathy for Jewish refugees fleeing pre-war Europe.⁹⁶ Nor, it seems, was any ethnic group immune. To one faithful Liberal in Windsor, Ontario, the “English immigrant” presented a particular menace, since “he no sooner lands on our shores than he is mustered into the Conservative party.”⁹⁷ The prime minister would undoubtedly have shared the concern.

Such communications may not have precisely reflected public opinion. They did, however, reveal something about the views that Canadians were expressing to their government. During King’s tenure, incoming correspondence was carefully organized and catalogued. Writers typically received a polite response from the prime minister’s private secretary assuring them that their views had been “carefully noted,” or would receive “due consideration”. Carbon copies of responses were maintained, often with notations to indicate whether the writer had favoured or opposed immigration. Although the prime minister surely did not read every letter, some contain notations in pencil with his initials, indicating his revisions to the draft reply. On occasion, there might even be a direct and personal response. King’s reply to one writer protesting against any plan to admit Jewish refugees demonstrated his acute sensitivity to the political challenges which immigration issues presented. “I have read with care your letter ... on

⁹⁴ LAC, W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 147, file I-200 “Immigration.” The Montreal submission emphasized unemployment, especially “the fact that thousands of immigrants...are out of work and increase [sic] the number of unemployed.” J. Ethienne Gauthier, City Clerk, Montreal, to King, 14 May, 1936. In contrast, the City of Kitchener pointed to agricultural problems, complaining that “many immigrants of this class have...left farms and drifted into the urban centres and became either competitors of the urban workers or a burden on the urban taxpayers. C.G. Lips, City Clerk, Kitchener to King, 24 December, 1935.

⁹⁵ LAC W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 147, file I-200 “Immigration.” Association des Petits Propriétaires de Hull to King, 14 December, 1935; L’Association Humanitaire Catholique to King, 1 February, 1936; E. Birch, United Farmers of Alberta to King, 1 February, 1941;

⁹⁶ LAC W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 147, file I-202-1, “German Jews.” “Patriotic Youths” to King, 9 March, 1936. The “Patriotic Youths” of Quebec demanded that the government “refuse entry of German Jews into Canada ... [and] officially leave the League of Nations.” Letters from individual citizens could be particularly virulent. See also file I-211 “Immigration-Refugees (1938).” “We got far too many Jews in Canada now,” one writer complained. The derogatory language in some of this correspondence is astonishing today, including references to “swines,” “sewer rats” and “squealing Jews”: S. McArthur to King, 19 November, 1938; “British war veterans” [sic] to King, 22 November 1938.

⁹⁷ LAC W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 147, file I-203, “Immigration – British.” Henry R. Daniels to King, 4 December, 1935.

the question of migration of refugees,” King wrote. “It is a subject on which there is a wide difference of opinion.”⁹⁸ There were many acrimonious voices, and the government was aware of them.

The outbreak of war in 1939 ensured that immigration would remain at miniscule levels. Wartime exigencies also mitigated against any change in policy from the exclusions imposed and maintained during the Depression. Throughout the war, Canada was governed almost entirely by administrative order, a situation which one contemporary scholar described as “a massive totalitarian regime.”⁹⁹ Ironically, however, there was almost no activity in the area of immigration, as the 1931 restrictions remained in place.¹⁰⁰ One rare exception was an order-in-council of December 10, 1943 allowing temporary admission permits for refugees who were transferred to Canada from Britain.¹⁰¹ There were occasional and limited refugee initiatives, but throughout the war the government of Canada “continued to oppose the idea of general admission of European refugees.”¹⁰² Immigration statistics did not distinguish refugees from other immigrant classes, allowing the government to suggest that refugee intake during the war had been generous. Public concern over refugees increased throughout the war, however, and would contribute to postwar policy changes. Still, on average fewer than 10,000 immigrants per year entered Canada during the war.¹⁰³ It is almost certain that a majority of those were spouses and family members of military service personnel.

The federal government began planning for postwar reconstruction and transition to a peacetime economy early in the war. Scholars continue to debate the effectiveness of this planning process, but generally acknowledge that it was well underway by 1943.¹⁰⁴ In April 1945 the plan was ready and the *White Paper on Employment and Income*, presented to Parliament by Minister of Reconstruction C.D. Howe, outlined the government’s proposed course of action. The *White Paper* charted an optimistic

⁹⁸ LAC W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 149, file I-211 “Immigration – Refugees, Vol. 3 – Personal and Confidential.” King to W.E. Dunton, 20 April, 1938.

⁹⁹ Brady, “Parliamentary Democracy,” 31. Writing in 1943, Brady noted that more than 25,000 order-in-council had been issued since the war began.

¹⁰⁰ Order-in-Council P.C. 2653, issued September 14, 1939 (four days after Canada’s declaration of war), barred from Canada all “enemy aliens and nationals” of enemy-occupied territories except those entering Canada as prisoners or detainees: *Canada Gazette*, October 7, 1939, 59.

¹⁰¹ Order-in-Council P.C. 9440, *Canada Gazette*, December 10, 1943, 639. Those admitted under this exception were subject to tight control. The order categorized their status as “similar, in essential respects, to that of enemy aliens.” The Director of Immigration was required to register all refugees to whom a permit had been granted with the “Registrar General of Enemy Aliens”. They were also made subject to the National Selective Service Regulations.

¹⁰² Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 72.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁰⁴ The realization that the Axis powers would be defeated provided one incentive; Liberal defeats in by-elections and at the provincial level undoubtedly also motivated the government to demonstrate its plan to lead in the postwar era: See McInnis, “Planning Prosperity,” 232-3, and Slater, “Colour the Future Bright,” 192.

postwar course, committing the government to maintaining “high and stable” levels of employment and income, through public investment, the promotion of trade, and policies designed to encourage the expansion of private investment. It also announced the government’s commitment to Keynesian principles of deficit financing “in periods where unemployment threatens.”¹⁰⁵ Further details were provided in the government’s “Green Book” proposals to the August 1945 Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction. There, a reorganised and centralized taxation system was proposed, to equip Ottawa with the resources to provide standardized ‘services’ nation-wide, and to effectively implement the social welfare state.¹⁰⁶

It was an ambitious plan, and the *White Paper* – clearly intended for public education – was a radical document. Its principal author, W.A. Mackintosh later described the extensive economic analysis that went into its proposals.¹⁰⁷ Given the prime minister’s own academic background in labour economics and industrial relations, and the economic strength of his wartime government, it is almost certain that these proposals were comprehensively researched, with due consideration to such factors as labour market conditions and – in the language of the time – projected ‘manpower’ requirements. These in turn would have required contemplation of postwar immigration levels. Yet the subject of immigration is not mentioned in either document. In 1945, as in subsequent years, it is evident that the government preferred to avoid any public discussion about immigration, regardless of the policies actually being contemplated.

The return of peace in 1945 brought immense euphoria and relief, but also presented new challenges for a weary government and its aging, exhausted leader. The *White Paper* proposals demonstrated the government’s intention to focus on domestic issues, a strategy born of the “confused social atmosphere at the end of the war” and fear that Depression-like economic conditions would return.¹⁰⁸ New international pressures, however, would soon distract the government from this inward-looking approach, as Canada responded to the demands of restoring world order and the challenges presented by wartime enemies (and even erstwhile allies). In the uncertainty of the times, the government showed no inclination to review its restrictive immigration policy. Soon, however, international obligations would combine with domestic pressures that had begun to appear almost imperceptibly during the war, and the postwar transformation of Canada’s immigration policy would begin.

¹⁰⁵ *Canadian White Paper on Employment and Income*, 1945.

¹⁰⁶ *Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction, Proposals of the Government of Canada*, August 1945.

¹⁰⁷ Mackintosh, “The White Paper on Employment and Income in Its 1945 Setting,” 17-8.

¹⁰⁸ Campbell, *Grand Illusions*, 20.

Chapter Three

The Postwar Years, 1945-1949:

Planning Continuity, Encountering Change

As details of Nazi atrocities emerged from wartime Europe, the tone of Canada's public discourse about immigration began to change. Even before the war, there were concerns and criticism directed toward the King government. A November 1938 *Globe and Mail* editorial castigated the prime minister for his silence in the face of recent Nazi "barbarity" (examples of which the *Globe* had been reporting on an almost daily basis). The editorial continued, inadvertently demonstrating the mixture of humanitarian concern and lingering racial antipathy that invariably characterized any immigration discussion: "Defend the Jews of Central Europe in their terrible plight or not, we cannot afford to let the spirit of righteousness lie dormant while barbarity marches in triumph." As to a response, however, the *Globe* suggested little beyond an indignant "official avowal" of each "ruthless act of Nazism."¹ Such criticism may have stung, but could hardly have been expected to provoke dramatic action. There remained, as ever, multitudinous opinions as to an appropriate immigration policy.

Official policy pronouncements remained dispassionate, even academic, in tone. The 1942 *Canada Year Book* acknowledged that "the term 'refugee' in recent years has acquired a much wider application than when it became familiar after the First World War," but saw no need to distinguish refugees from other immigrants. "Widespread changes," whether in policy or in statistical reporting, would cause inconvenient statistical inconsistency by rendering "comparison between pre-war and post-war immigration quite impossible." In any case, although the statistics did not distinguish refugees from other immigrants, "it is well known that the majority of those who have entered Canada from Europe in recent years belong to [the refugee] category."²

Although wartime correspondence directed to the government remained divided, sympathetic voices were increasingly raised in favour of a more open policy in response to Europe's growing crisis. Correspondence from individuals and various Christian organizations, often quoting scripture, increased

¹ *Globe and Mail*, November 18, 1938, 6. A copy of this editorial in the prime minister's archived correspondence suggests that it was, at least, noted: see LAC, MG 26, J2, vol. 147, file I-211 "Immigration – Refugees (1938)".

² *Canada Year Book*, 1942, 165-6. Historian Julie Gilmour identifies refugee issues as a key factor in changing Canada's public discourse on immigration after 1945. However, only in 1969, when Canada belatedly ratified the 1951 *Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, were refugees recognized as a distinct immigration category: Gilmour, "And who is my neighbour?" 159-65.

significantly, especially following an April 1943 CBC radio broadcast in which University of Manitoba professor Watson Thomson urged listeners to petition the government over the plight of European Jews.³

If the level of public concern was rising during the war, the government received only rare inquiries about the issue in Parliament. CCF member M.J. Coldwell, responding to the throne speech which opened the 1943 session, referred briefly to “Jewish refugees from nazi aggression [currently] languishing in...prison camps,” but he called on the government to demand “a voice in the inner councils of the united nations” rather than for any particular humanitarian action.⁴ Hansard recorded no further discussion of the subject until April of that year, when a Liberal MP asked whether the government would attend the upcoming British-American conference on refugees in Bermuda. When Mines and Resources minister T.A. Crerar declined to answer, promising only to bring the question to the prime minister’s attention, his colleague was incredulous. If the minister did not know, then who did? “He is the minister in charge of immigrants, refugees and guests.”⁵ No response was forthcoming, however, and no further parliamentary discussion ensued until Winnipeg MP Stanley Knowles raised the issue of Jewish refugees once again on May 28. Had the government, Knowles asked, received the recent resolution of the Canadian Jewish Congress requesting that Canada offer sanctuary to “a reasonable number” of Jewish refugees who may have escaped Nazi-held territory, and if so, what was “the attitude of the government in this matter”? This time, the government’s reply was more telling. The prime minister could not say whether the particular item had been received, but he allowed that “having regard to the number of communications which have been received on the subject,” it was likely to be “among the number.” Mackenzie King also acknowledged that there had been other requests for “a statement with respect to refugees from Europe generally, and the government’s attitude towards the problem.” Rather than provide a response “which would refer exclusively to members of the Jewish community,” King promised a broader explanation of the government’s thinking on the refugee issue: “I shall, I expect, be making the statement in the course of a few days.”⁶

The prime minister’s “few days” amounted to six weeks, but on July 9, 1943 he delivered a wide-ranging update on the war as part of the debate on estimates for the Department of External Affairs. The

³ See LAC W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 147 file I-205 “Confidential – Immigration – Jewish,” which contains numerous letters to the government in response to the CBC broadcast. If not universally galvanized, Canadians were at least becoming more concerned. Still, one sympathetic writer thought it important to clarify her appeal. “I may add,” she emphasized, “I am not a Jew.” (Mrs.) M. Wood to King, April 26, 1943.

⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1943: I, 59.

⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1943: III, 2246. In fact, Canada was not invited to the Bermuda meeting, but received a summary of its recommendations, as King later acknowledged. Moreover, as Gerald Dirks explains, it was clear to Canadian officials that Canada would be called upon to “play a larger role” both financially and otherwise toward resolution of the refugee problem: Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 93-4.

⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1943: IV, 3125

speech reviewed recent military developments, the activities of various government agencies, and the planning that was underway for postwar refugee settlement and the establishment of a united nations' organization. Also included was a lengthy statement of the government's "policy" concerning European refugees. "Only the most callous," King began, could deny the desperate plight of those driven from their homes by Nazi persecution, especially the Jewish people. There were, however, significant obstacles to any immediate relief effort. Most of the oppressed were still "contained within the ring of territories held by the axis armies." For those few who had managed to escape into neutral countries, there was no available means of transportation to carry them to safety. Quite simply, King explained, there was no immediate solution available and "nothing that the allied governments can do to save these hapless people except to win the war as quickly and as completely as possible."⁷ In other words, there was abundant sympathy but no particular policy to announce.

Somewhat belatedly, King also acknowledged that the April conference in Bermuda had produced "certain recommendations" concerning initiatives to assist refugees. However, the details of those deliberations – and, presumably, any commitments given in response – had to remain confidential, lest they become known to the enemy and "adversely affect the refugees whom we are trying to aid." Moreover, the prime minister argued, Canada had already accepted "a very considerable refugee population." Some 9,000 persons had been admitted by way of special orders in council between 1933 and 1942. More than 300 Sudeten families had come to undertake agricultural settlement. Total immigration from Europe between 1933 and 1942 was 39,000 "the bulk of whom were refugees." And these numbers did not include those being accommodated temporarily: British evacuees, German internees transferred from Britain, and prisoners of war. Under the circumstances, King concluded, it was just not possible to say how many additional refugees Canada might accept. All things considered, however, Canada's record on refugee matters was "better than it is frequently made out to be" and would stand in comparison to the United States and other Commonwealth nations. Still, he conceded that Canada had not "done all that we could have done and perhaps we have not done all that we should have done."⁸

Despite this moment of candour, the 1943 policy statement was otherwise characteristic of Mackenzie King: expressing humanitarian concern, affirming that Canada would "play its full part" in any future refugee initiatives, but offering no specific commitment as to what that part would be. The refugee situation was dire, but other wartime concerns were more pressing.

⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1943: V, 4558-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4559-61.

Whether or not all parliamentarians agreed that the admission of 39,000 European immigrants over ten years represented an impressive total, the ensuing debate demonstrated little opposition concern and generated little criticism. Conservative members Howard Green and John Diefenbaker confined their comments to other foreign policy issues, while the CCF's Coldwell suggested mildly that "we might have initiated some conferences or made some attempt to solve the problem in a way which I might term more Christian."⁹ Once again, only Stanley Knowles returned purposefully to the topic of immigration. Presenting a meticulous review of Nazi atrocities, Knowles acknowledged that the refugee situation was "quite frankly ... a subject in which there can hardly be said to be wide public interest; rather it is a subject in which, I feel, a lead should be given to our people." Canada, Knowles asserted, was simply not doing enough: "The point is ... that waiting to help these people in the best way we can later on is ... not good enough in view of the fact that many of them – thousands, perhaps millions – will not be there to help." Canada should provide sanctuary, because "these people are human and deserve that consideration and because we are human and ought to act in that way."¹⁰

Astonishingly, Knowles' passionate appeal concluded parliamentary discussion on immigration for the duration of the war. A full year later, in August 1944, Mackenzie King provided another detailed update on the progress of the war, again during the debate on estimates for External Affairs. This time, however, he made no reference to refugees. Neither did the opposition, in reply.¹¹ The intermittent parliamentary debate on the issue remained dormant until December 1945 when Liberal backbench MP David Croll touched off a lively discussion during debate on supply for the Immigration Branch. Croll acknowledged that the return of overseas service personnel was the only 'immigration' Canadians were currently concerned with, but he called for leadership and a plan from the government, and soon. Both short-term humanitarian factors and long-term economic ones demanded a careful assessment of Canada's future needs. Such planning, Croll declared, "must be realistic, intelligent, and rational." It must adopt a new and very different approach, recognizing that countries traditionally favoured as preferred sources were no longer likely to provide immigrants. It was time, Croll argued, to "divorce

⁹ Ibid., 4569.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4605-8. Knowles' remarks were reminiscent of a Winnipeg *Free Press* editorial a month earlier which excoriated the government's inaction on refugees: "It is our responsibility as civilized human beings to save their lives and if we shirk this responsibility, the talk about our Christian civilization is high-sounding hypocrisy." See: "Our 'Anti-Humanism'", *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 17, 1943, 13.

¹¹ One subject reviewed extensively in this update was the government's postwar strategy respecting persons of Japanese origin. While acknowledging that "no person of Japanese race born in Canada has been charged with any act of ... disloyalty", King nevertheless assured Parliament of the government's intended plans, including a ban on Japanese immigration to Canada and the repatriation to Japan of any "who have shown disloyalty." As with immigration, the subject drew little opposition criticism. "I suggest," replied Conservative Howard Green, "that the resettlement policy be commenced at once." See Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1944: VI, 5915-26.

immigration from agriculture.” The nation’s economy was undergoing serious change, and the skills needed in future would be those which could contribute to an expanded export trade, to domestic markets for manufactured goods, and in the building trades. Croll also alluded to concepts that would soon become familiar to the immigration lexicon. He noted the importance of assessing the country’s “ability to absorb” as part of the planning process, as well as the implications of Canada’s evolving ‘middle-power’ international status: “We have obligations and responsibilities and we must live up to them.”

David Croll was a Russian-Jewish immigrant. He represented a Toronto constituency with a significant Jewish population, and he did not mince words as he directed his final remarks to the minister, J. A. Glen. “I cannot help saying,” he concluded, “that we have on our statute books at the present time a great deal of racial nonsense.” As for the department itself, “Let us agree that it was dormant; there was a war on, but that is no excuse for not doing anything now.”¹² The task of concluding the debate fell to the taciturn J.A. Glen, the minister responsible for immigration, who in all likelihood had not enjoyed what he heard. There could be no announcement regarding immigration or any long-range immigration policy, Glen declared, since “the first duty of the government is the repatriation of our service personnel and their dependents as well as their reestablishment.”¹³ Once again, there were more obstacles and competing priorities than reasons to act.

One historian has suggested that “the question of immigration and refugee admission was of high priority in the minds of many members”¹⁴ in the postwar House of Commons. It may have been, but the parliamentary record does not support that generalization. While several MPs voiced their support for Croll’s remarks, most were CCF members representing rural western constituencies with large immigrant populations. Their influence on the government – like that of Coldwell, Knowles, and the few outspoken Liberal backbenchers – was limited. Progressive Conservative members remained virtually silent on the refugee issue and on immigration. The record in Hansard from this period therefore suggests that the subject concerned only a few MPs to any great degree, and troubled the government hardly at all.

The Senate, however, proved less reticent. It moved in April 1946 to convene a Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, to inquire broadly into Canada’s “problem of immigration.” Among the topics to be investigated were the operation and administration of the *Immigration Act*, the “desirability” of admitting immigrants and the “types” to be preferred, the “facilities, resources and capacity of Canada to absorb, employ and maintain such immigrants,” and “the appropriate terms and

¹² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1945, 2nd Session: III, 3525-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3537.

¹⁴ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 131.

conditions of such admission.”¹⁵ With grand flourish, Senator Arthur Roebuck described the fundamental issue confronting the committee: Would Canada remain indefinitely “a third-rate power, wielding at most a secondary influence in world councils” or would she exploit her “treasure trove” of resources “to become one of the most pregnant and powerful of nations?”¹⁶ The committee gave itself a wide-ranging mandate with terms of reference that seemed to foreshadow its eventual findings and recommendations.

The Senate committee wasted little time getting to work, convening ten days of hearings between May 21 and July 31, 1946. Immigration Branch director Arthur Joliffe was the first witness.¹⁷ Others who appeared were representatives of Ukrainian, Polish, Finnish, and Jewish associations, labour leaders, transportation companies including the CPR, CNR, and Cunard White Star Ltd., and the Canadian National Committee on Refugees, whose chairman B.K. Sandwell was editor of the popular *Saturday Night* magazine. Individuals, church organizations, and government officials also presented briefs.

On August 14, just two weeks after its final day of hearings, the Senate committee tabled its findings. Canada’s immigration problems, it announced, fell into three categories and all were urgent. First, the Dominion’s own statisticians calculated that some 27 million acres of “unused and reasonably accessible land” remained available for agricultural settlement. There was, however, a “definite shortage of farm labour.” Resolving that shortage would be critical and could ensure that “what has been accomplished in the past by immigration ... may be repeated in part at least in the future.”¹⁸ Since much of the land in question was under provincial control, the committee urged immediate consultation with the provinces on the issue.

The second area in need of attention was industry. The report outlined transformations to the economy in industrial and resource development which had been accelerated by the war. These sectors, too, could be further developed through programs that “intelligently selected immigrants in the managerial, technical and artisan classifications,” and once again the committee pointed to historical examples of industries that had been developed by the skills and knowledge of earlier immigrant groups.¹⁹

Thirdly, there were public and private institutions in need of domestic help. Numerous witnesses had testified to the great numbers of potential immigrants in Europe with housekeeping experience “who

¹⁵ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1946, (April 11, 1946) 102.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Joliffe sought to dampen expectations, reminding committee members of the 60,000 service personnel and dependents awaiting repatriation. “The whole question of immigration,” Joliffe equivocated, remained “under consideration.” Quoted in Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 132.

¹⁸ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1946, “Appendix A, Report” (August 14, 1946) 628.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 629.

would be happy indeed were they admitted to Canada to work as domestics,” whether in hospitals, nursing homes, or private residences.²⁰

The report noted that of all the witnesses appearing before the Senate Committee, none had expressed opposition to immigration in principle. Even organized labour was not opposed, or at least not to the extent that had been suggested.²¹ Moreover,

There was a consensus of opinion that immigration is of major importance to Canada, for increases in population are necessary if we are to hold our place abroad and maintain and improve our standard of living at home. Other countries are taking action and world conditions are changing rapidly, so that the problem for Canada is extremely urgent.²²

Having identified the approach that was needed, the report turned its focus to legislation and policy administration. In its current form the *Immigration Act* was, in reality, “a non-immigration act [whose] main purpose seems to be exclusion.” The report pointedly noted that “the authority to amend the law which is given to the executive has been used by order in council to prohibit all immigration, with very restricted exceptions.”²³ The most recent of those orders in council, which had relaxed passport requirements for incoming refugees, granted permanent status to those admitted since 1939, and broadened some admissible classes based on relationship to Canadian residents, were acknowledged only as “minor concessions” rather than significant initiatives.²⁴ The entrenched legislative regime, the report inferred, was almost beyond repair and would require major revision: “Little is to be gained by a discussion of the act in its detail.” Instead,

What is needed is a new policy of selective attraction to replace that of repulsion, and a vigorous administration that will search out a reasonable number of immigrants who are desirable and then find means of bringing them here and of assisting them in being successful after their arrival. They should be taught the advantages of life in this country, and be made into Canadian citizens in spirit as well as in fact as rapidly as possible.²⁵

²⁰ Ibid., 629.

²¹ Canadian Congress of Labour president A.R. Mosher, and Trades and Labour Congress president Percy Bengough both offered assurances of the qualified support of “their great organizations ... provided it [i.e. immigration] did not reduce the Canadian standard of living” or introduce “a pool of cheap and docile workers” to the employment market: Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1946, “Appendix A, Report” (August 14, 1946), 630.

²² Ibid., 628.

²³ These pointed comments appear to be among the earliest parliamentary criticism of the delegated executive powers through which immigration policy was administered: Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1946, “Appendix A, Report” (August 14, 1946), 630.

²⁴ On May 28, 1946, Order in Council P.C. 2070 waived passport requirements for displaced persons and P.C. 2071 extended the classes admissible on the basis of relationship to Canadian residents. The order granting permanent status to refugees arriving since 1939 was P.C. 6687, issued October 26, 1945. See Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1946, Appendix A, Report” (August 14, 1946), 633.

²⁵ Ibid, 630.

The report's recommendations were clear and unequivocal. Canada required "a well-considered and sustained policy of immigration" and it required a great number of people. An accurate appraisal of the report's significance, however, requires a close examination of its message. Although there were references to Christian duties and moral obligations, especially toward refugees, the report's principal arguments for immigration were economic in nature – sustained industrial and agricultural development simply required a greater number of people. The committee's argument was not for an 'open door' based exclusively or even primarily on humanitarian generosity, but instead was framed by concepts which would become foundational to postwar policy – absorptive capacity, careful selection, suitability, and adaptability to Canadian citizenship.

Historians have suggested that the Senate committee report "received widespread approval from Canada's press," immediately generating broad public support for open immigration.²⁶ In fact, media reactions varied substantially. The *Globe and Mail* provided front-page coverage on August 15 and editorialized favourably the following day, commending the Senate committee "for acting when the Government continued to sidestep the issue." Reflecting its conservative proclivities, the *Globe* interpreted the report as a thorough "condemnation of government inaction," describing at length the "passive" half-measures to help refugees which the report documented and the dissembling behind excuses that cited a lack of available transportation: "The committee was told that shipping companies could not be expected to acquire vessels suitable for immigrants until the Government's policy had been announced."²⁷

Elsewhere, press coverage was more restrained. The *Winnipeg Free Press* provided a brief summary of the report but eschewed editorial comment, perhaps finding little that would justify its usual complimentary treatment of the Liberals.²⁸ The *Toronto Daily Star* surprisingly did not mention the report. In contrast, the *Montreal Star* predicted "widespread public approval throughout the Dominion" for the report's recommendation of a vigorous immigration policy, but carefully reassured its Quebec readership that the Senate had "rejected the strenuous efforts ... by advocates of a wide open door ... to admit all and sundry."²⁹ The *Vancouver Sun* likewise focused upon elements of the report that would interest local readers. It noted the report's call for a "new policy of selective attraction" to replace current exclusionary rules, but reassuringly emphasized that there would continue to be limits:

On the Oriental immigration question [a longstanding concern to British Columbians] the committee reported any question of discrimination based upon either race or religion should be

²⁶ Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, 133. See also Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 160.

²⁷ "Basis For Action," *Globe and Mail*, August 16, 1946, 6.

²⁸ "Selecting Immigrants Is Urged," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 15, 1946, 9.

²⁹ "For Selective Immigration," *Montreal Star*, August 15, 1946, 10.

scrupulously avoided in the act and its administration, the limitation of Asiatic immigration being based, of course, on problems of absorption.

This racist apologia notwithstanding, the *Sun* came out in favour of the report, concluding that “[t]he addition of 100,000 people a year would not be too great a morsel to digest.”³⁰

There is no record of any reaction from the government to the Senate report. The prime minister was in Europe at the time of its release, fully occupied with postwar international concerns, and his diary made no mention of the Senate’s treatment of the immigration issue. But the report’s economic argument, and its terminology, would appear regularly in later government pronouncements, beginning with King’s famous 1947 statement on immigration policy. This was its major contribution and an important impetus to postwar policy.

Despite its official silence, the government did not remain entirely inert, convening an interdepartmental committee on refugee issues in early 1946. Predictably, this initiative did not originate within the Immigration Branch or the Department of Mines and Resources. Instead, the Department of External Affairs, which had previously established its own committee to examine the problem of European refugees, provided the impetus. Representatives of the Departments of Labour and Health, together with immigration officials, joined the interdepartmental committee when it met in March.³¹ On May 9, (the day after the Senate voted to convene its standing committee) the Cabinet received and considered the interdepartmental committee’s first report on immigration policy. In their deliberation, Cabinet members acknowledged the increasing pressure to act on refugee concerns. The volume of applicants seeking entry to Canada was creating a backlog. In response, Cabinet approved revisions in the immigration regulations “as a short term measure,” permitting the admission of close relatives of Canadian residents and relaxing passport requirements for refugees “in certain cases.”³² The May 28 orders in council (grudgingly described by the Senate as “minor concessions”) implemented those

³⁰ “New Immigration Act Advocated,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 14, 1946, 2. Also: “Canada Preferred,” *ibid.*, August 19, 1946, 4.

³¹ Dirks provides a comprehensive account of the formation of the Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration and the Department of External Affairs’ leadership in its early deliberations. Information furnished by overseas diplomatic personnel demonstrated the urgency of the refugee problem to the committee and the government. Dirks also notes the characteristically unenthusiastic contributions by immigration representatives. “The problem,” complained one Immigration Branch official, “just bristles with difficulties.” See Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 138-41.

³² *Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 6849, “Immigration Policy; report of Cabinet Committee,” May 9, 1946*, LAC, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2638, 3.

measures. The Cabinet minutes also noted the committee's recommendation that a "review of long term immigration policy" should be undertaken.³³

These were indeed small, tentative steps, but they represented the government's first active engagement with the issue of postwar immigration policy. The interdepartmental committee would remain in place, expanding in numbers and influence while the Liberals remained in office during the 1950s.

The Senate, meanwhile, reconvened its standing committee in subsequent years, and continued to exhort the government to greater action. As deliberations resumed in 1947, Arthur Roebuck noted approvingly several initiatives undertaken during the past year, including the admission of some 4,000 Polish soldiers,³⁴ and the further expansion of classes of admissible 'close relatives' to include the siblings and orphaned nieces and nephews of Canadian residents. Additional regulatory changes had also been implemented in January 1947 to facilitate admission for those with agricultural, mining, and logging skills.³⁵ Roebuck welcomed these initiatives, but he decried the slow pace of policy change and the government's continual "hedging about" with admissibility criteria.³⁶ Once again, the Senate committee conducted an extensive round of hearings with an expanded list of officials and organizations as it redoubled its effort to promote awareness of the country's immigration needs.³⁷ Its subsequent report, tabled on July 10, noted that public approval for "the admission of a considerable number of carefully selected immigrants" had become "more forceful and decided" over the past year.³⁸ The report recommended further changes in policy. The use of regulations, for example, had served "the useful purpose of establishing priorities" for groups deemed preferred or most needy, but they now seemed

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ On July 25, 1946 Louis St. Laurent announced that "a limited number of single ex-members of the Polish armed forces [would] be admitted to Canada conditionally for farm work." Order in Council P.C. 3112, issued July 23, stipulated that Immigration Branch representatives would conduct the selection process in the UK and Italy and that each soldier must undertake to remain in agricultural work for at least two years after arrival. Transportation costs were paid by the British government. The opposition's chief "concern in the matter" was voiced by Conservative MP Gordon Graydon, who sought assurance that those admitted under the initiative would indeed be "experienced" farm workers. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1946: IV, 3837.

³⁵ Order in Council P.C. 371/1947, January 30, 1947, LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954. (This order amended the 1931 order-in council, P.C. 695, which had effectively closed Canada to immigration at the beginning of the Depression and still remained in place.)

³⁶ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1947, 101.

³⁷ In his motion to re-convene in 1947, Roebuck recommended a "somewhat different policy" from 1946: "Then we invited those who seemed to have special knowledge of this subject to appear before us; but ... this year I would suggest that [the committee] throw its doors wide open and extend an invitation to all who have views to express or knowledge to impart." Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1947, 104. This year the new deputy minister of Mines and Resources, H.L. Keenleyside, accompanied Arthur Joliffe to the hearings, perhaps signalling the government's growing respect for the committee's endeavours: *Ibid.*, 586.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 587.

unnecessarily restrictive. The committee therefore recommended that “greater liberty of discretion in special cases” be extended to immigration officials,” to alleviate hardship and remove restrictions on immigrants from countries that had been wartime enemies.³⁹

Although the Senate Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour continued to meet into the early 1950s, the momentum of its early activities was not sustained. A much shorter report tabled for 1948 offered only modest recommendations, including the “[c]ontinued expansion and activity (sic) of the Immigration Branch” and the “[a]dmission of a greater diversity of occupational skills and some of the highly trained experts in the D.P. camps.”⁴⁰ Even the previous year’s recommendations had shown signs that less progressive notions were entering the committee’s thinking, expressing, for example, preferences for immigrants who were married or were related to persons already in Canada. No report was tabled for 1949 or 1951, while the 1950 report consisted primarily of an examination of the estimates of various branches with immigration-related responsibilities. In 1952, the Senate confined itself to an examination of the government’s proposed new *Immigration Act*. Senators were nevertheless pleased with their efforts, taking credit for numerous regulatory changes and increased immigration numbers. “I regard with great satisfaction,” one senator declared, “what this house has accomplished in the formation of public opinion [and] in the bringing about of more modern regulations.”⁴¹

Kelley and Trebilcock suggest that although the Senate committee’s 1946-48 annual reports were forwarded to the prime minister, “it is not clear that they had any direct impact on government policy.”⁴² This assessment seems at least slightly harsh, and it is clear that in the House of Commons pressure on the government began to increase during 1946-47. Responding to the throne speech opening the 1946 session, CCF member Anthony Hlynka delivered an impassioned plea on behalf of refugees, especially Ukrainians, facing forced repatriation in Europe.⁴³ Several days later, on March 29, Conservative Gordon Graydon questioned the prime minister about refugee policy and Canada’s proposed contribution to the crisis. As usual, King was non-committal. The whole “question of refugees,” he declared, “is about the most difficult problem with which any administration is faced at the present time.” If and when transportation problems eased and conditions in Europe stabilized, a “more liberal attitude” toward the problem might be possible.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 592.

⁴⁰ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1948, 666.

⁴¹ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1950, 80.

⁴² Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 322.

⁴³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1946: I, 224-30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 396.

Vague assurances and non-committal statements, however, did not dissuade the few parliamentarians who were genuinely interested in these issues. And once again, impatience was not confined to the opposition benches. An April 3, 1946 motion by CCF member Ross Thatcher, pleading for the government to institute a comprehensive immigration program, received support from both sides of the House. “It seems strange,” Thatcher observed, “that during the recent war, at the very time Canadians were being urged to ... help in eradicating racial intolerance abroad, our own nation was practicing similar intolerance ... in selecting its immigrants.”⁴⁵ When David Croll raised the issue again in August, the minister’s lengthy response revealed his growing exasperation. Glen acknowledged that the government was under increasing pressure to formulate an immigration policy. But how could it possibly reconcile all demands? When critics argued “that there should be selective immigration, and in the next breath that there should be no discrimination, then I venture to say that ... I do not see how we can have selective immigration without discrimination.”

A policy would be forthcoming “sooner or later,” the harried minister added. A cabinet subcommittee had been established to examine the issue, as well as an “interdepartmental committee of high-ranking officers.” The issues, however, were overwhelmingly complex. Immigration might be a straightforward matter of domestic policy, but the refugee issue was “international in scope.” Revealing an attitude of resignation rather than initiative, he continued:

We have a representative on the united nations organization which will be meeting in September ... and as one of the united nations Canada will, I presume, be asked to take her share of these stateless persons and will have to assume her obligations as a member of the united nations.⁴⁶

With no specifics and nothing more to add, Glen concluded with a plea for patience. He hoped to provide more in the near future but in the meantime, “we are dealing with the matter as best we can.”⁴⁷

Glen’s description of the creation of an “interdepartmental committee of high-ranking officers” was made almost in passing. He offered no information to Parliament about the committee’s mandate and – inexplicably – the opposition requested none. In private, however, Glen was saying much more. Passing through Winnipeg in October 1946, he visited with Grant Dexter, the long-time Ottawa correspondent (and now editor) of the Winnipeg *Free Press*. Dexter’s extensive notes of the discussion detailed the policy initiatives that were, according to Glen, under consideration. “The government,” Dexter recorded, “has decided to go in for immigration in a major way. A cabinet sub-committee has been

⁴⁵ Ibid., 525.

⁴⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1946: V, 5496. (David Croll’s comments are quoted in Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 158-9.)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

appointed under his chairmanship and the sub-committee has been suitably equipped with experts etc.” The parameters of a postwar immigration policy initiative would be enormous: “The plan, Glen says,” was:

1. To wait the outcome of the refugee proceedings at the [United Nations] Social and Economic council meeting – to see what other members are prepared to do in the way of accepting refugees.
2. Then to call a Dominion-Provincial conference to establish what might be called a national mandate. Drew, for example, is strong for large scale immigration; talks of a population of 25,000,000 in Ontario. Tory-wise, he would offset Quebec. Duplessis [would] probably try to hinder or hamper if not oppose outright. The conference would not deal with specific policies or plans – just the overall question – do we want them? Moreover, as governments responsible for property and civic (sic) rights and, as matters now stand, for the care of the unemployed, the provinces might feel they had been slighted if not consulted. Anyhow a go-ahead from the provinces is regarded as certain.
3. Appoint a Royal Commission to review the substantial body of authoritative material on the capacity of the country to absorb population (Sirois appendices, Census Bureau... etc.). The Commission’s job would not be a complicated one and a report would be looked for in a matter of months.
4. Proceed with large scale immigration policy.⁴⁸

Dexter was a veteran journalist whose connections within the Liberal party and the King government were legendary. Yet even he seemed taken aback by Glen’s remarkable disclosures. Dexter was also skeptical: “I don’t go bail for any of this,” he concluded, “merely report a conversation.” Undoubtedly Glen did exaggerate parts of the story, including his own role in the proposed initiative. (As Dexter noted, a *Free Press* correspondent had recently determined that the interdepartmental immigration committee had not yet begun to function.) But it is evident from the details Glen provided that he was not fabricating everything. A major initiative was under consideration, with both a royal commission and a federal-provincial conference to provide the necessary form and substance. An aggressive, even unprecedented, postwar immigration policy was at least under serious consideration.

Ultimately, Dexter’s skepticism proved justified. There would be no federal-provincial conference on immigration, no royal commission, and no transformational public policy announcement. Once again, the *Free Press*’ intimate connections to the government secured an explanation of why the plan had collapsed. Correspondent Max Freedman, who succeeded Dexter at the *Free Press*’ Ottawa bureau, had canvassed the issue with various senior Liberals – cabinet ministers Paul Martin and J. L. Ilsley, deputy

⁴⁸ Queen’s University Archives (QUA), Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 4, File 29 “Correspondence - General, 1946 Sept. – Dec.” *Memo: Mr. Glen, Oct. 19, 1946.*

ministers Clifford Clark of Finance, Lester Pearson of External Affairs, and Hugh Keenleyside of Mines and Resources, and Jack Pickersgill. Numerous factors had led to the demise of the initiative.

First, as Paul Martin explained, “the programme had bogged down because of political difficulties (Quebec)”. Several versions of a statement, to be given by Glen as minister responsible for immigration, “had been prepared and rejected.” Then there were administrative problems: “the department was not equipped to handle a large-scale immigration and was in very low gear. This was Keenleyside’s major problem.”⁴⁹

A third factor – also uncovered by Freedman – was disagreement among cabinet members and senior policy makers. On one side of the argument was J.W. Pickersgill of the prime minister’s office, who explained to Freedman that “he didn’t think much about this immigration talk.” In fact, the future immigration minister’s views were astonishingly candid:

[Pickersgill] was particularly disgusted by the current chatter about the need for domestic servants. What good would they be to Canada? I said the children of many laborers had turned into most useful citizens. He agreed. But having domestics simply was pampering to some of the worst instincts of bourgeois respectability. He would take all the doctors he could get and engineers but not a miscellaneous assortment of people.⁵⁰

The contrary position was articulated by Keenleyside and Gordon Robertson (also from the prime minister’s office), which Freedman also dutifully recounted:

Quebec was less hostile to immigration than she had been for years and now was the time to strike. Many of the immigrants would be Catholic though this could not be said publicly. [Keenleyside] thought a minimum figure of 100,000 a year for 10 years should be our objective. Gordon said it should be 150,000, in view of the annual loss to the U.S.⁵¹

Martin, Keenleyside, and Robertson also shared additional details of the proposed initiative and the government’s current thinking on immigration. So far as Martin knew, “no definite figure had yet been set for the number of immigrants Canada should receive this year or annually ... for a fixed period.” Moreover:

There were two different aspects of policy that had to be considered: the refugee problem and a national immigration policy. The two were separate and distinct. On the refugee problem, if

⁴⁹ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 4, File 30 “Correspondence – General 1947 Jan. – June” *Ottawa Memo – Max Freedman*, April 2, 1947, 1.

⁵⁰ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 4, File 30 “Correspondence – General 1947 Jan. – June” *Ottawa Memo – Max Freedman*, Thursday, April 2, 1947, 2. (Note: There are two documents bearing the same title.)

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

agreed action on the international scale could be obtained, Canada would likely take a percentage based on population, of the number of refugees the United States would be willing to receive.⁵²

Keenleyside and Robertson were equally candid, providing Freedman with further details. They described plans to suspend immigration regulations that barred entry to contract workers in cases where there might be Canadians capable of doing the job. This would remove a longstanding ‘irritant’ to immigration from the United States, although suspending (rather than rescinding) the regulation would reassure organized labour that the restriction could be re-imposed if necessary. In fact, Robertson advised, the active promotion of immigration from the U.S. would be a cornerstone of the government’s policy, since a dearth of available shipping would continue to limit immigration from the United Kingdom and Europe.⁵³ Keenleyside was likewise “most frank” in his disclosures, acknowledging criticism from others who felt “he was throwing his weight around too much for a new deputy.” Among other candid admissions, Keenleyside noted that “one of his first tasks was to pep-up the immigration branch and to appoint new men, often over the heads of existing officials.” Keenleyside was more impressed with immigration branch director Arthur Joliffe than with other program ‘holdovers,’ but he noted that “all had been trained in the bad school of Blair when a policy of no-immigration had been in force, and it was rather hard to make them think now in terms of a positive immigration policy.”⁵⁴

Despite their differences, Freedman’s Liberal contacts did agree on one issue: the prime minister’s intervention would be required to resolve the issue of differing viewpoints and set a course for immigration policy going forward. That intervention soon came, with predictable results. Mackenzie King would undoubtedly have recoiled at suggestions of royal commissions, Dominion-provincial conferences, and ground-breaking announcements in this policy area, if they were ever presented to him. As we shall see, within weeks of the disclosure of these radical policy proposals to Freedman and Dexter, King would return to Ottawa (from UN meetings in New York) and rouse himself from illness and exhaustion to address the matter of immigration policy, albeit in a much less sensational manner.

As months passed and preparations continued for the prime minister’s immigration policy statement in May 1947, Glen’s difficulties only worsened. Whatever policy changes the government might be planning, his job was to say as little as possible. On February 11, 1947 he moved second reading of legislation to repeal the *Chinese Immigration Act* (CIA). Enacted in 1923, the CIA was the only overtly racist federal immigration statute. The announcement of its repeal might have been expected

⁵² QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 4, File 30 “Correspondence – General 1947 Jan. – June” *Ottawa Memo – Max Freedman*, April 2, 1947, 1. Martin’s comments offer a rare example of interest in American policy on the part of Canadian policy makers.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

to draw complimentary reaction, but for the minister there was no such luck. British Columbia Conservative MP Howard Green complained that the government had not identified an alternative policy to the CIA. Failure to do so, Green charged, would threaten the “friendly feeling for the Chinese people” that had developed slowly over time. Green also pointed out that a 1930 order in council, P.C. 2115, had prohibited the landing in Canada of all Asian immigrants. Even with the repeal of the CIA, that regulation would still apply, continuing to exclude Chinese immigrants. What was more, Green argued, “an order in council is not a very solid foundation for an immigration policy”. When Ross Thatcher joined the debate with another passionate call for action on European refugees, an embattled Glen could only reply that he had introduced a specific legislative measure, and had not intended to initiate a wide debate on policy. Earlier (perhaps hoping to avoid further discussion) Glen had endeavoured to stay on message:

On this whole question, I find so many opinions expressed throughout the country that I feel we ought not to make hurried proposals.... There are as many opinions on the subject as there are writers and commentators, but all do not seem to realize the responsibility involved.... [T]he whole matter of immigration is under review daily at all times.⁵⁵

Domestic political concerns, whether they emanated from the Commons, the Senate, or elsewhere, might be irritating and even embarrassing, but they were manageable. International pressures, however, were another matter entirely. There is substantial evidence to show that the primary catalysts for change in the King government’s postwar approach to immigration were international in character. Canada emerged from the war into a new and elevated ‘middle-power’ status among nations. As historian Roger Sarty explains, that status would prove temporary, arising “by default because of the war-exhaustion of the traditional great powers,”⁵⁶ but with it came expectations and responsibilities.

Mackenzie King, aging and ailing after the war, most certainly did not welcome the responsibilities presented by middle-power status. James Eayrs explains that the prime minister was slipping badly even before 1945, and by 1947 “had reverted to the isolationism of his pre-war years.”⁵⁷ As Eayrs and others have documented, King was distressed by the fast-moving pace of postwar

⁵⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: 1, 307. (These appear to be Glen’s final contributions to parliamentary debate on immigration policy as mines and resources minister. By mid-1947 he had taken ill. He never returned to cabinet and died in 1950.)

⁵⁶ Sarty, “The Interplay of Defence and Foreign Policy,” 138.

⁵⁷ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 13. Eayrs succinctly summarizes King’s postwar decline, and his tenacious efforts to maintain his hold on government, at pp. 4-12. Similar assessments may be found in Angelika Sauer, “So Untimely a Retreat,” and Robert Malcolm Campbell, *Grand Illusions*, 19-20, which describes King during this period as “pessimistic,” “obsessed by the spectre of unemployment,” and “guided by the post-World War I experience.”

international affairs. He could accept the idea of an effective “assembly of nations” but he recoiled at the potential military commitments which collective security might bring.⁵⁸

Among the international issues that could not be indefinitely avoided was the European refugee crisis. King understood and reluctantly accepted “that it was important for Canada to make a sufficient contribution to the new international community”⁵⁹ by, among other things, responding to the crisis. More broadly, he worried about UN interference in matters of domestic policy: “There is going to be a great danger of the U.N. refusing the idea of justifiable rights of selected immigration with racial and other discriminations.”⁶⁰ The pressure to contribute prevailed over King’s reservations, and Canada’s postwar “Displaced Persons” program was launched in 1947. Pursuant to special orders-in-council, admission was granted to refugees under new criteria set out in two programs: a “Close Relatives Plan” and a “Group Movement Plan.”⁶¹ Over the next six years, some 165,000 immigrants would arrive under this initiative.⁶²

Canada’s response to the crisis involving European displaced persons has come to be seen as a transformative first step toward a modernized postwar immigration policy. Historian Julie Gilmour describes the program as “an exercise in governmental action in the face of perceived negative public opinion.”⁶³ So it was, although as we have seen, the impetus behind it was not exclusively altruistic. Earlier analyses – of which Gerald Dirks’ 1977 study was most prominent⁶⁴ – were generally less complimentary, arguing that much more should have been done. External Affairs officer John Holmes, who was stationed in London during the war, recalled in his memoirs the frustration within External Affairs caused by the cabinet and other elements of the civil service, particularly the Immigration Branch, through their relentlessly conservative “population policies” and “insensitivity to the plight of refugees.”⁶⁵ Increasingly, Holmes recalled, others within the public service were sharing this frustration.

⁵⁸ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 139-40.

⁵⁹ Gilmour, *Trouble on Main Street*, 205.

⁶⁰ LAC, *Diary of William Lyon Mackenzie King*, February 13, 1947.

⁶¹ *Canada Year Book*, 1948-1949, 173-4.

⁶² Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 28.

⁶³ Gilmour, “The Kind of People Canada Wants,” 117. This is the most recent of several fine analyses of the postwar refugee program. A detailed description of Canada’s DP program is, of course, beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁶⁴ Dirks persuasively argues that Canada’s acceptance of wartime refugees was undertaken only reluctantly. His overall verdict is also unequivocal, describing postwar immigration policy in general as “unimaginative, plodding, and inadequate.” See Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 148.

⁶⁵ Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, 94.

Ultimately, Gilmour attributes change in both public discourse and policy to the influence of key “individuals working within a larger international community of interests.”⁶⁶ In particular, as Holmes explained,

External Affairs battered vigorously against what they regarded as the defensive mentality entrenched in the Immigration Branch, sought to warn the cabinet of the desperate realities they saw in Europe, and to encourage an imaginative approach to a population policy for Canada.⁶⁷

The ‘battering’ was effective. Canada became an original signatory to the agreement creating the United Nations’ International Refugee Organization (IRO), and also signed an interim agreement on measures concerning refugees and displaced persons in December 1946. The interim agreement required no immediate commitments beyond placing a representative on the IRO’s “preparatory commission.”⁶⁸ Its implications, however, were undoubtedly clear to the government, and fulfilling them would entail much more than the vague reassurances hitherto provided to Parliament.

Gerald Dirks attributes Mackenzie King’s 1947 policy statement to recommendations generated by the interdepartmental committee on immigration.⁶⁹ As we have seen, however, there were other influences upon the government, and the committee was neither the sole impetus for the statement nor its author. Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence of the Interdepartmental Committee’s active role in the development of postwar policy options, and the government’s growing interest in the subject. Minutes of the Interdepartmental Committee’s February 24, 1947 meeting reveal both the range of items under review and the extent to which the cabinet was now actively directing the policy review process. The meeting was chaired by External Affairs undersecretary Lester Pearson and included deputy ministers or directors from the Departments of Agriculture, Labour, Trade and Commerce, and National Health and Welfare. The ubiquitous Arthur Joliffe represented Mines and Resources. Officials from the Privy Council and Prime Minister’s offices also attended. Among the items discussed were proposed rules and procedures to administer Order in Council P.C. 371,⁷⁰ and potential strategies to address labour market requirements for domestic ‘servants’ and professionally trained engineers in the postwar workforce. The main issue, however, was the recent direction from Cabinet:

The Chairman reported that Cabinet on February 13, 1947 directed this Committee to complete and submit, at the earliest possible date, their report on a general immigration policy which, within prescribed limits, would avoid discrimination on racial grounds. In this connection,

⁶⁶ Gilmour, “‘And who is my neighbour?’” 160 -1.

⁶⁷ Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, 94-5.

⁶⁸ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954*. “Agreement on Interim Measures to be taken in Respect of Refugees and Displaced Persons. United Nations: Lake Success, New York 1946.”

⁶⁹ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 147-8.

⁷⁰ See footnote 35, above.

consideration might be given to the establishment of an appropriate overall maximum figure to be apportioned on quotas based upon the related numbers of the racial groups in Canada at the last census. In view of the urgency of the matter, it had been necessary for Mr. Robertson (member of the working sub-committee [of Cabinet]) to prepare, at very short notice, a draft report, (copies of which have been circulated).⁷¹

These were remarkable instructions. Their contradictions were self-evident – simultaneously forbidding racial discrimination but suggesting the possibility of race-based quotas – and they almost appear designed not to be followed. But they also show a government urgently seeking a viable immigration policy, one that would avoid discrimination on the basis of race, “at the earliest possible date.” Despite the vague obfuscations in its public pronouncements, the Liberal government recognized the forces of change at work in the world and the inevitable influence they would assert on this policy area, and was seeking a response.

The ‘draft’ proposals, prepared by Gordon Robertson of the Prime Minister’s Office, attempted to square the contradictory circle. There were multiple factors and preferences to be considered. Canada appeared to require “a fairly large number of immigrants,” but an “open door” approach could not be contemplated. A preponderance of British, American and European immigrants should be sought, but selection should be based upon “personal qualifications” rather than race. The resulting recommendation was for an elaborate quota system whereby admissions would be related to the “national origins” of the country’s population according to the 1941 census. Immigrants from preferred sources such as Britain and America could be conveniently omitted from any quota system, while undesired racial groups – even if coming from those countries – could be controlled by quotas imposed upon persons adjudged not to be of “British descent.” Administrative challenges might also arise, particularly if the government attempted to set figures in advance or publicize any quota numbers. Robertson therefore recommended avoiding any public commitment to numbers: “It seems probable that a larger total of immigrants could be admitted if they were simply brought in on a piece meal basis than if over all figures ... were stated in advance.”⁷² All of this represented a proposed long-term policy approach. For the “immediate future,” the draft proposals recommended that “special provision [should] be made for the admission of displaced persons on a non-quota basis.”⁷³

⁷¹ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954*. “Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration Policy,” February 24, 1947, 2.

⁷² LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954, Confidential: Draft Proposals for Immediate Measures to Regulate Immigration into Canada*, 1-5.

⁷³ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954, Summary of Draft Proposals for Immediate Measures to Regulate Immigration*, February 19, 1947.

Although the proposals were cautious and qualified, Arthur Joliffe reacted to them with alarm, arguing as usual against substantive policy change. There were studies underway in various departments, Joliffe cautioned. These would need to be examined, and data analysed, before any precipitous decisions could be contemplated. Administering a quota system of any kind “would require a consular service spread over the countries of the world from which immigrants would come, and this machinery is not yet available.” The whole idea of a quota system, Joliffe warned, was just too “problematical at the moment” and in any case, the existing system was entirely adequate. Under the current regulations, “admissible classes can be expanded or restricted as the economy and other considerations in the country necessitate.”⁷⁴

An evidently impatient Lester Pearson, the committee chair, reminded members of their mandate to remove racial discrimination. He “questioned how this could be done except under a quota system.” At the very least, if the committee was not prepared to recommend a quota system, “some recommendation should be made.”⁷⁵ Caution, however, won the day. The committee adjourned, having agreed only to study the matter further and seek further guidance from Cabinet.

Despite the uninspiring contributions from the interdepartmental committee, the government persevered in its efforts to formulate a policy. The Cabinet Committee on Immigration Policy, chaired by Mines and Resource minister Glen, convened on January 8, 1947. Several issues were reviewed. First, in response to complaints from the Chinese government and “having noted Canada’s obligation under the United Nations Charter to avoid racial discrimination,” the committee recommended repeal of the *Chinese Immigration Act*. Regulations would also be broadened to permit entry of wives and unmarried children of Canadian citizens of Chinese origin (who had previously been excluded). Other recommendations sought to address postwar shortages of agricultural labour, and to broaden regulations governing the admission of relatives, to include widowed and orphaned family members (also previously excluded).⁷⁶

On March 3 (one week after the unproductive February 24 interdepartmental committee meeting), the Cabinet committee met again. On this occasion, it reviewed a summary – helpfully prepared by Joliffe – which reminded members that there were, at present, only three general ‘classes’ of immigrants eligible for admission, namely: ‘Class A’ – relatives of Canadian residents; ‘Class B’ – agriculturalists; and

⁷⁴ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954. *Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration Policy, February 24, 1947*, 2-3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁶ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954, *Report From Cabinet Committee on Immigration Policy*, January 20, 1947, 1-2.

‘Class C’ – farm labourers and persons experienced in mining, logging, and lumbering.⁷⁷ For immigrants within Class C, no procedural guidelines had yet been established. The Department of Labour was recommending that all immigrants except wives and children under eighteen should be required to sign a definite contract or undertaking” with their employer of at least two years’ duration, as a condition of admission. After discussion, the committee agreed to recommend that such contracts not be required in all cases.⁷⁸

By early 1947, nearly two years after the end of the war, the government had implemented only minor changes to its restrictive immigration regulations. Public statements continued to be sporadic and non-committal. It is apparent, however, that the combined pressures of public, parliamentary, and international interest in the issue persuaded the prime minister that some definite pronouncement must be made. As we have seen, his May 1 statement to the House followed prolonged strain and deliberation.⁷⁹ When it did come on May 1, the statement was typical of Mackenzie King. It seemed to promise much, announcing the government’s commitment “to foster the growth of the population of Canada by the encouragement of immigration.” But many qualifications followed, all carefully crafted to reassure Canadians that no fundamental alteration in the “character” of the nation’s population would be permitted. King promised a “careful selection” process to ensure the admission only of “such numbers ... as can advantageously be absorbed.” Administratively, immigration “services” would be expanded and strengthened, but there were no plans to disturb existing admission criteria, either those favouring certain groups or those which prevented others. “Canada,” King affirmed, “is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens.” Moreover, “[i]t is not a ‘fundamental right’ of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege. It is a matter of domestic policy. Immigration is subject to the control of the parliament of Canada.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954, *Secret: Meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Immigration Policy*, March 3, 1947, 1-2. (The rules which Joliffe was summarizing had been promulgated under two orders in council: P.C. 2071 in May 1946 and P.C. 371, issued in January 1947.)

⁷⁸ Joliffe remained undeterred in his efforts to discourage initiative. In a March 14 memo to Glen, he sought to dampen expectations raised by earlier estimates of ocean transportation available for 1947. Now, following discussions with railway and shipping officials, Joliffe reported that instead of capacity for 75-100,000, a figure of 25-30,000 “might even be optimistic.” Not wanting to *appear* obstructionist, Joliffe recommended that the minister intervene directly with the carriers. “I suggest that letters from yourself to the President of the C.P.R. and the President of the Cunard organization urging that everything possible be done to obtain more passenger tonnage for the Canadian immigration traffic.” LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954, *Memorandum – Honourable J.A. Glen*, March 14, 1947.

⁷⁹ See above, Introduction, 1-2. Writing to his principal secretary from New York in April, King apologized for not giving his attention to several pressing items, including the proposed immigration statement. “Among other evidence of excessive fatigue,” he explained, “I seem to have lost a certain power of will.” LAC, W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J3, vol. 117, King to Pickersgill, April 19, 1947.

⁸⁰ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2644-7.

Despite its cautious ambiguity, historians have frequently acknowledged King's statement as the foundation for Canada's postwar immigration policy. So it was, but significant aspects of the statement have been overlooked. The first, (and perhaps least surprising) is that King offered no hint as to the number of immigrants that might be admitted in the coming weeks, months or years. Citing the usual reasons – transportation shortages, conditions in postwar Europe – King pronounced himself unable to say “what may prove feasible.” ‘Absorptive capacity’ would remain a conveniently imprecise concept, allowing the government to avoid public commitment to any specific number of immigrants, even as decisions about those number were taken.

Second, and more noteworthy, was the brevity of the prime minister's reference to the European refugee crisis. The May 1 statement was delivered just days before the government launched its massive initiative in respect of European displaced persons, the largest refugee initiative in Canadian history.⁸¹ As Julie Gilmour and others have shown, planning for the initiative had been underway from at least 1946, and was all but complete by this time. Yet King revealed almost nothing about the project. “The resettlement of refugees and displaced persons,” he intoned, constituted “a special problem.” King acknowledged that there were plans to send immigration staff “to examine the situation ... and to take steps looking towards” a group movement, but otherwise confined himself to reassurances of an orderly and careful selection process, promising that any refugees admitted would be “of a type likely to make good citizens.”⁸² Overall, King's description seemed to imply that the refugee initiative remained safely in the future.

As John Holmes acknowledged, for all its cautious, equivocal phraseology, King's statement recognized a “new factor” in Canadian policy.⁸³ International expectations, often in the form of moral pressures, may have been avoidable in earlier times, but would be increasingly important to future immigration policy. For all of Holmes' frustrations (noted above) it is reasonable to conclude that the King government understood these new influences even if the Canadian public still did not. Thus, as

⁸¹ Plans to launch the DP initiative were quietly finalized between May 20 and 27, based on final recommendations from acting Mines and Resources minister C.D. Howe and his deputy minister, H.L. Keenleyside. The first order in council was passed on June 4. Plans to “explain the decision to Parliament and the Canadian public” were left until later: Gilmour, “The Kind of People Canada Wants,” 90-3. In March, Cabinet had formed yet another committee, the Immigration-Labour Interdepartmental Committee, to identify industries and employers to whom refugees might be contracted. This committee met no fewer than seven times between April and May; its detailed recommendations were foundational to the labour contract system that was utilized throughout the DP initiative: LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26, Volume 225, File I-17, Immigration 1937-1954, *Report of the Immigration-Labour Interdepartmental Committee*, May 23, 1947.

⁸² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2645

⁸³ Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, 104.

Gilmour notes, “great efforts were made to assure Canadians that DPs were coming to Canada to work ... at jobs that no Canadians desired in remote locations, and that they would not cause labour conflicts.”⁸⁴

As the Displaced Persons program was launched in the summer of 1947, there were few outward indications of impending changes to longstanding immigration policies. Special regulations were implemented for “DPs” but otherwise, existing rules setting admissibility criteria remained, as before, restrictive in scope and intent. But postwar conditions had created new priorities, some of which seemed incompatible, and the challenge now confronting the government was how to achieve a “rapid increase in foreign labour supply without the ‘upset’ which a substantial change in ethnic balance would cause.”⁸⁵ Once again, a low-key approach seemed the prudent course. The easiest solution, as Green explains, was to expand the categories of relatives who could be sponsored by other landed immigrants or Canadian residents. Other revisions followed, relaxing restrictions on “unskilled or general labour” and – beginning in 1948 – broadening admissibility criteria to include immigrants from countries not previously included.⁸⁶

The immediate postwar period produced only these minor regulatory revisions. The government’s continuing incremental and cautious approach is attributable to several factors, all of which seem familiar or at least unsurprising. First, the Canadian public remained divided on the issue of immigration, a reality confirmed by numerous published polls and in postwar correspondence directed to the government.⁸⁷ A second factor was bureaucratic inertia. When Hugh Keenleyside became deputy minister of Mines and Resources in March 1947, he discovered a department in desperate need of an overhaul. “It might have served,” he recalled, “as a horror story in a textbook on public or business administration.” Ever the diplomat, Keenleyside attributed the problems not to the various branch directors, but to the department’s dispersion across multiple locations and other administrative inefficiencies.⁸⁸ But the Immigration Branch, under Joliffe and his predecessor Frederick Blair, had controlled immigration policy for decades. As we have seen, the impetus that drove the DP initiative came from international factors and influences from within other areas of the federal bureaucracy. Those ‘forces’ however, had not penetrated the Immigration Branch’s hold over ‘general’ immigration policy.

⁸⁴ Gilmour, *Trouble on Main Street*, 205.

⁸⁵ Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-3.

⁸⁷ For examples of poll data see Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, 97-8 and Gilmour, “And who is my neighbour?” 169-70. Correspondence to the Prime Minister, while generally supportive of the refugee initiative, was far from unanimous. See, for example, LAC, W.L.M. King Papers, MG 26, J2, vol. 428, File I-20-D, “*Immigration 1946-47*”, Shipyard General Workers’ Federation of British Columbia to King, Nov. 13, 1947. As noted earlier, King was an assiduous reader of correspondence to his office.

⁸⁸ Keenleyside, *On the Bridge of Time*, Volume 2, 288.

Thirdly, there were (as always) other legislative priorities, including one whose implications for immigration policy would only later become evident. For too long, Canadian citizenship had remained an imprecise and contested concept, with a rather sordid history.⁸⁹ After the war, the government turned its attention to the subject. Various aspects of citizenship were defined, inconsistently, in a patchwork of legislative provisions including the 1910 *Immigration Act*, which still remained in force.⁹⁰ In late 1945, secretary of state Paul Martin introduced legislation to create the first *Canadian Citizenship Act*. Although Martin's own biographer disputes his claim that the inspiration for the Act was his, Martin's important role in its 1946 passage is beyond dispute.⁹¹

Martin's act created and defined, for the first time, a distinctly Canadian citizenship to be conveyed by birth in Canada, to children born to Canadian parents living abroad, or by naturalization. To Martin's disappointment (and to the dismay of many critics) the traditional criteria of British subject-hood remained as part of the new definition. However, other provisions modernized rules by which foreign nationals could acquire citizenship, set criteria for revocation, and created ceremonial procedures designed to emphasize the privileges and responsibilities which citizenship conveyed.⁹² Gilmour perceptively situates the Act in a postwar context of broad "public debate on the nature and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship," especially in relation to newcomers.⁹³

In 1949, the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State would be incorporated with Immigration into a new federal ministry. In light of that later development, it is tempting to view the *Citizenship Act* as an initial step in a broader immigration strategy. However, there is little evidence to demonstrate a deliberate connection, at least initially, and contemporary policy-makers said little to suggest otherwise.⁹⁴ For the time being at least, immigration policy initiatives would be confined to less inspirational tasks, such as departmental reorganization.

⁸⁹ Enactments during World War One were among the most notorious measures to revoke citizenship rights from targeted groups. Excellent accounts of these episodes are found in Boudreau, "The Enemy Alien Problem in Canada," 67-9; 92-3, and English, *The Decline of Politics*, 153-4.

⁹⁰ The 1910 statute defined Canadian citizen as persons either born in Canada, British subjects having Canadian domicile, and those "naturalized under the laws of Canada." (Domicile was attained upon three years' residence after being landed in Canada): *Immigration Act*, S.C. 1910, Ch. 27, section 2(f).

⁹¹ Donaghy, *Grit: The Life and Politics of Paul Martin Sr.*, 73-8.

⁹² *The Canadian Citizenship Act*, S.C. 1946, Ch. 15.

⁹³ Gilmour, "The Kind of People Canada Wants," 197-8; 203-6.

⁹⁴ Historian Adam Chapnick convincingly argues that there was at least a tangential connection between the CCA and immigration policy. In his perceptive analysis of Louis St. Laurent's famous 1947 Gray Lecture, Chapnick notes: "The government hoped that the [Citizenship] act would eliminate some of the ethnic and racial tensions that had been aggravated by the conscription crisis and immigration decisions of the Second World War." Chapnick, "The Gray Lecture and Canadian Citizenship in History," 443.

Mackenzie King's famous 1947 policy statement drew only muted response in the House of Commons and generated little subsequent debate. Conservative Davie Fulton responded first, complaining that the prime minister's remarks offered many generalities but few specifics. Notably, however, Fulton wholeheartedly agreed with the statement's general principles: that Canada was "not obliged" to accept immigrants in numbers dictated elsewhere, and "perfectly within her rights" to establish selection criteria. In fact, Fulton concluded, given the possibility "through some other interpretation of the united nations (sic) charter, of our being called upon to accept large numbers of immigrants from any country ... I am certainly glad to have the statement from the Prime Minister that no such attitude will be adopted." If anything, Fulton continued, the proposed policy appeared too liberal. He decried the lack of "effective control" over Asiatic immigration which would follow repeal of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, urging in the alternative, a treaty with China to control the 'problem' effectively.⁹⁵

The opposition had nothing more to say. Only David Croll (a Liberal) attempted to prolong the debate. On July 10 Croll raised his own concerns about the generalities in King's statement, articulating a policy which, though "commendable" was "not bringing about results." What was needed, Croll argued, was a "full-time" Immigration Branch that was allowed to "stand on its own two feet."⁹⁶ As other MPs voiced support for Croll's remarks, backbench criticism seemed once again to be mounting. This time the task of responding fell to the government's 'Minister of Everything,' C.D. Howe.

Howe – temporarily acting as Mines and Resources minister after J.A. Glen had taken ill – was in no mood for debate. Directing his comments to an unnamed member who "has repeated the cry that the government has no immigration policy," Howe proceeded to set the record straight. In fact, he declared, "the government has a specific, well-rounded and coordinated policy of immigration. It is being applied actively and energetically by an expanded and competent branch of the department." The monologue continued as Howe summarized in detail the current rules: free entry for immigrants from Britain and the US; admission for Displaced Persons who were either sponsored by relatives or qualified by special quotas established under that program; admission for people with agricultural, mining or lumbering skills, and the fiancés, spouses or other close relatives of Canadian residents. He noted that there were twenty-six offices in operation to "carry this policy into effective operation," naming them one by one. And finally, Howe unabashedly explained the current policy in respect of Asian immigration: "Except for the

⁹⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2698-9.

⁹⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: VI, 5417.

wives and minor families (sic) of Canadian citizens of Chinese ...or ... East Indian origin, there is at present no provision for oriental immigration to Canada.”⁹⁷

Howe was well-known to favour immigration. He was optimistic about the postwar economy, and viewed labour shortages as a more likely problem than unemployment. It was therefore ironic that his remarks foreclosed debate by MPs who also sought a more open policy. Hansard recorded no further discussion of immigration policy during the immediate postwar years.

On November 26, 1949, Louis St. Laurent announced plans to reorganize several departments within the federal government. (St. Laurent succeeded Mackenzie King as Liberal leader and prime minister in 1948, and was returned to office with an overwhelming electoral majority the following June.) The legislation he now introduced would create three new federal ministries: Resources and Development, Mines and Technical Surveys, and Citizenship and Immigration. Two departments – Reconstruction and Supply, and Mines and Resources – were to be abolished. The source of these administrative changes is not entirely clear, but the idea for a Department of Citizenship and Immigration may have originated with J.W. Pickersgill, the prime minister’s principal secretary. (In his memoirs, Pickersgill modestly recalled that the prime minister “left the task of devising a new structure largely to me.”⁹⁸)

The prime minister explained in detail the rationale for a new administrative structure, acknowledging a “growing feeling” among parliamentarians that “the Immigration Branch had very little relationship to the other activities of the Department of Mines and Resources.” Moreover, “the increasing importance and complexity of immigration required more attention from both the Minister and the Deputy Minister.” In addition, the changes recognized the need for a coordinated relationship between the Citizenship Branch (formerly of the Department of the Secretary of State) and the immigration program:

The Citizenship Branch is designed to bring to full citizenship as many as possible of those who immigrate to this country. The scope of the Citizenship Branch has been expanded since the passing of the Citizenship Act. It was felt that uniformity of policy and treatment was more likely to be achieved if one Minister had the responsibility for both immigration activities and the activities pursued by ... the Government to bring those immigrants as quickly as could reasonably be expected to full citizenship.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: VI, 5446.

⁹⁸ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 339-41.

⁹⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1949, 2nd Session: III, 5446

Lastly, the Indian Affairs Branch (already within Mines and Resources) would remain with the new department, ensuring that the country's "original inhabitants" were also included in the department's mandate to convey citizenship to all, whether they were born in Canada or immigrants.

A bill creating the Department of Citizenship and Immigration was introduced and quickly passed and the new department began operation in January 1950. On January 18, Order in Council P.C. 264 appointed Ontario MP Walter Edward Harris to be Canada's first Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.¹⁰⁰ Long afterwards, Harris described the circumstances of his appointment in an interview with journalist Peter Stursburg. There was no prior discussion with the prime minister, Harris recalled, and he had been given no inkling of the appointment:

Jack [Pickersgill] called me up on the phone one day and said get your wife and come on the train to Ottawa tonight which I did. The next morning, [we] walked in on Mr. St. Laurent and said, oh yes, we're going out to see the Governor General and got out there and found out that I'd be Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.¹⁰¹

For Walter Harris, it was an inauspicious beginning to an eventful ministerial career.

¹⁰⁰ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, Volume 96, File D-55 Department of Citizenship and Immigration – Personal and Confidential 1950; 1952-53, *Certified True Copy: P.C. 264*, 18 January 1950.

¹⁰¹ LAC, Peter Stursburg Fonds, R5637, Vol. 51, *Stursburg/Harris Interview*, July 25, 1979, 70.

Chapter Four

The St. Laurent Years, 1950-1953:

Old Wine in New Bottles

The cabinet portfolio to which Walter Harris was appointed in 1950 was new in name but little else. Its component parts, as we have seen, were established organizations – the Immigration and Indian Affairs Branches of the Department of Mines and Resources, and the Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State. The new minister was thus spared the administrative challenges that might otherwise have accompanied the creation of a new federal department. A new deputy minister, Laval Fortier, was appointed to replace Hugh Keenleyside who had returned to the foreign service.¹ Harris later explained to journalist Peter Stursburg that Fortier attended to the administrative details. The only substantial change, he recalled, was that “the immigration side of [the Department] was greatly expanded.” Unfortunately, Harris did not elaborate on the extent of this expansion. However, in a brief description of the period that this chapter will explore, he continued:

[U]p to that time while we’d been taking in a large number of immigrants, they were, to a considerable extent, the post-war DP type.... [W]e were still doing our best to help clear out the camps in Europe and there was no organized immigration scheme as such. The DP camps and quite a bit of the British Isles were coming under existing rules that hadn’t been changed so we set about changing the Immigration Act in due course.²

This succinct summary implied that few substantive policy changes were contemplated for the new department. At the time of its creation in 1950, Harris was also careful to announce that the “organization of the new department has not resulted in any substantial increase in personnel.” A new “departmental administration branch” was formed, but otherwise all required personnel had been seconded from elsewhere, namely the former departments of Mines and Resources, and Reconstruction and Supply.³

Administratively, however, Harris now led a substantial bureaucracy. By 1949, the year prior to the reorganization, the Immigration Branch had evolved into several units, two of which were a “Canadian Service” and an “Overseas Service.” The former maintained staff “at each of the 269 ports of entry along the Canada – United States border and on the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard” to verify the

¹ On the day of Harris’ appointment as Minister, Order in Council P.C. 267 appointed Fortier “to be the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, with salary of \$12,000 per annum.” LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, vol. 96, File D-55-D, “1949-50”.

² LAC Peter Stursburg Fonds, R5637, Vol. 51, *Stursburg/Harris Interview*, July 25, 1979, 71.

³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: II, 1762.

admissibility of every person seeking entry to Canada. The overseas division maintained four offices in the United Kingdom and Ireland and managed “a roster of over 500 ... British doctors” retained to conduct medical examinations on prospective immigrants. In other Commonwealth countries where the Immigration Branch did not maintain offices, “intending immigrants are dealt with by officials ... of the Canadian High Commissioners.”⁴ Relationships, such as this, with other branches of government were becoming integral to the work of the Department, especially following the immigrants’ arrival in Canada. Coordination between the Immigration Branch’s “Settlement Service”, the National Employment Service of the Department of Labour (NES), and the Citizenship Branch was important to the settlement process, as were the expanding connections with provincial authorities and private organizations.”⁵ These relationships would also create interdepartmental friction, at times, and impede the development of clear policy direction. In June 1950, during the debate on supply for the new department, Harris provided details about its size and operating requirements. There were now 3,100 employees in total, of whom 2,200 were temporary, 839 permanent, and 100 classified as ‘casual.’ A budget of \$20,555,166 was presented to Parliament for approval for the department’s first year of operation.⁶

Despite Harris’ recollection that there was “no organized immigration scheme”, there is evidence to suggest that the government was contemplating a major initiative immediately following the formation of the new department. Another of Grant Dexter’s Liberal contacts, Winnipeg MP Ralph Maybank, confided to Dexter that the subject of immigration was once again under consideration, as it had been in 1946-7. The concern, Maybank reported, continued to be potential reaction in Quebec, where many assumed that opposition would be intransigent. However, a recent conversation with the new immigration minister had surprised him. Walter Harris, Maybank explained, “has come to change his mind” after discussions with his deputy minister Laval Fortier:

[Harris] says that Fortier assures him that Quebec will not raise any so great opposition as we fear. So long as we do not go out after anti-Catholics, Quebec will accept a reasonable policy on immigration. This would not mean letting the bars down a la Sir Clifford Sifton but Quebec will

⁴ *Canada Year Book 1950*, 182.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 182-4. Among the organizations now engaged in settlement work, the *Year Book* identified the Canadian Christian Council for Resettlement of Refugees, formed in June 1947, and “consisting of the following members: the Catholic Immigrant Aid Society, the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, the German Baptist Colonization and Immigration Society, the Canadian Lutheran World Relief, the Sudeten Committee and the Latvian Relief Fund of Canada.”

⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: IV, 3690. These figures include all branches of the new department, of which the Immigration Branch was the largest. Only four years earlier, in 1946, total expenditures on immigration services were \$2.2 million, and there were fewer than 1000 employees in that area: Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 81. Curiously, there was no discussion about the Department’s large percentage of “temporary” employees. Later, however, the minister explained that it was customary to hire extra summer help at border points to cope with tourist traffic; *Ibid.*, 3699. It is also possible that the transfers of some employees who had been with other departments prior to 1950 were not yet formalized.

take a great many. One reason for this is the fact that most immigrants must in the nature of the case be Catholic.

“I think,” Maybank surmised, “Walter is getting ready to try to put over a more active immigration policy.... It could be that the doors might be widened a bit after Parliament rises. This may not be the right thing to do but it is something that the Immigration Act permits so there is a possibility in that respect.”⁷

Maybank’s information was not conclusive, and it is unlikely that Harris had expected the details of his conversation with a fellow MP to be shared with Dexter (especially its pragmatic assessment concerning the religious background of prospective immigrants). However, a June 1950 statement on immigration policy during the estimates debate offered further insight into the minister’s current thinking. Harris began by reaffirming the government’s commitment to the “principles” set out by Mackenzie King in his 1947 policy statement. There was, he explained, a new problem. A “serious decline” in immigration to Canada had recently developed, and the government was examining the “complex external factors” that had caused it. Harris did not elaborate on those “factors,” mentioning only the restrictions on the export of capital which some European countries had imposed in response to postwar exchange problems.⁸ But he assured the House that negotiations were underway with several countries regarding the exchange issue, and that “every effort” was being made to negotiate a resolution of this and other impediments.⁹

As a further demonstration of the government’s desire to promote immigration, Harris tabled a new order in council, to take effect on July 1, 1950. Reflecting the government’s longstanding approach (and Harris’ own view) that immigration regulations “must necessarily be flexible,” P.C. 2856 would supersede a patchwork of existing regulations and broaden the eligibility criteria for immigration to Canada. As before, British, American, and French immigrants would continue to be almost automatically admissible so long as they met “civil and medical requirements” and could support themselves. But the new regulation would add “all other immigrants” who could meet two general criteria:

- (a) That they are suitable immigrants having regard to the climatic, social, educational, industrial, labour and other conditions or requirements of Canada; and

⁷ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 5, File 37 “*Correspondence – General 1950 Jan. – June.*” R.M. to Dexter, April 22, 1950. Maybank’s criticism – that this was not the “right thing to do” – appears to refer to the proposal to wait until after Parliament had risen, rather than to the actual plan to increase immigration.

⁸ In a 1952 Cabinet memorandum Harris again attributed the decline during 1949-50 to stagnant economic conditions in Europe, particularly the UK, noting that “in 1948 the amount of dollars available to an immigrant was reduced and in 1949 ... the pound was devalued.” LAC Privy Council Office Records, RG 2 Vol. 212, File C-20-5 1952, No. 51-100, “Confidential Minister’s Memorandum to Cabinet,” February 21, 1952, 2.

⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: IV, 4448-9.

- (b) They are not undesirable owing to their peculiar customs, habits, mode of life, methods of holding property or because of their probable inability to become readily adapted to or integrated into the life of the Canadian community and to assume the duties of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry.¹⁰

As these references to “climatic” and “social” suitability and “peculiar customs” inferred, the new regulation was not, in fact, designed to extend admissibility to “all other immigrants.” Order in council P.C. 2115 – promulgated in 1930 – remained in place, ensuring the continued exclusion of “Asiatics.” In reality, the new rules would extend admissibility only for European immigrants. As usual, the government emphasized that immigration from preferred sources such as Britain and France would continue to be “encouraged by every means possible.” A program of special training on selection procedures would be delivered to overseas officers, and administrative delays and inefficiencies would be addressed through “directives from the minister ... issued from time to time to senior immigration officers in the field defining classes of persons who are admissible.”¹¹

These ‘new’ criteria set out in P.C. 2856 perpetuated long-entrenched biases, but despite their limitations they represented an effort to promote increased immigration (and an immediate increase did indeed occur beginning in late 1950¹²). Harris concluded by summarizing how the new regulation would be administered. Some classes of immigrants would be granted admission without reference to the minister. These would include British, French, and American applicants, the fiancés and relatives of Canadian residents, agriculturalists, domestics and nurses’ aides, and persons sponsored by employers or specifically recommended by immigration branch officers.

Perhaps the most significant component to P.C. 2856 was the absolute discretion which it placed directly on the minister. The new regulation stipulated that “all other immigrants” (i.e. the now-admissible European groups) “must satisfy the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, whose decision shall be final” of their compliance with the new admission criteria. For a government professing a desire to reduce inefficiency and delay, this was an extraordinarily retrograde measure; the minister alone would now be the final arbiter for virtually every application under this category. The workload created by this measure would torment ministers and create legal and political problems for successive governments over the ensuing years. In 1950, however, Harris believed the changes would facilitate an increase in numbers.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4449.

¹¹ Ibid., 4449.

¹² LAC Privy Council Office Records, RG 2 Vol. 212, File C-20-5 1952, No. 51-100, “Confidential Minister’s Memorandum to Cabinet,” February 21, 1952, 2. This later report also credited other factors for the increase. The government’s decision to embark on a rearmament program created an immediate requirement for skilled workers, while demands for skilled and unskilled workers generally remained “so urgent that we could ignore the usual seasonal unemployment during the winter months of 1950-1.”

He noted that the “relatives” category, previously limited to immediate family members of Canadian residents, was now “widened to include all bona fide relatives.” Ministerial discretion would be exercised “to make prompt decisions” in respect of immigrants bringing capital to establish a business, professionals, or special group-movement applications.”¹³

The series of “directives from the minister” to which Harris referred also began to appear, continuing the modernization process initiated by Hugh Keenleyside. Archival records for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration files contain ministerial directives on a broad range of administrative and policy issues. Many demonstrated the continuing influence of ‘traditional’ priorities: a May 1950 directive instructed staff to ensure that a pamphlet extolling the benefits of living and working in Canada was included with all responses to enquiries from Britain.¹⁴ Other directives addressed more routine but nevertheless politically sensitive issues, reminding officers to avoid being photographed or identified in media reports, and addressing concerns raised by “unnecessarily long” correspondence.¹⁵ The avoidance of publicity was a particular priority: a 1951 directive cautioned against “public statements” by branch officers “relating to policy and internal problems,” and especially forbade any acknowledgment of the existence of immigration “quotas.”¹⁶ One particularly substantive directive, issued on December 15, 1950, set forth ten pages of “Procedures Relative to Selection of Immigrants.” The document’s dry language did not hide the fact that traditional selection criteria still prevailed, as it focused on prospective UK immigrants, and on “capital cases ... with sufficient transferable capital to establish an industry, business or service.” (A minimum capital amount of \$3000 was stipulated.) Other guidelines similarly reinforced established principles. Officers were reminded when discussing “areas of settlement” of the importance of “an equitable distribution across Canada.” They were also reminded of their responsibility to report on such items as applicants’ education, experience, and “personal effects”, and to assess personal characteristics such as physical appearance and “degree of mental alertness.”

¹³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: IV, 4450.

¹⁴ LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, vol. 940/41, Binder 28, “H.Q. Directives Series C – 1950-52” Immigration Branch Directive No. 19, May 3, 1950. “Subject: Pamphlet “Canada – A Chance to Work, to Live, etc.”

¹⁵ See LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, vol. 940/41, “H.Q. Directives Series C – 1950-52” Directive No. 28 (untitled) June 20, 1950 and Directive No. 107, “Subject: Correspondence” (undated). These items demonstrate the government’s determination to avoid any unwanted publicity. Officers were cautioned that their role, particularly in cases having “sensational appeal to the press,” might be open to “equivocal interpretation.” All “publicity of dubious taste” was to be strictly avoided. Correspondence, moreover, must be “brief and to the point.” (In Directive No. 107, the Department also found it necessary to remind officers that “Good manners and courtesy are to be observed at all times.”)

¹⁶ LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, vol. 940/41, Binder 28, “H.Q. Directives Series C – 1950-52” Immigration Branch Directive No. 76 (Revised), February 9, 1951.

Significantly, the directive's concluding provisions stated: "There will be no change in procedure with respect to applications arising in the British West Indies."¹⁷

Ranging in scope from mundane administrative and personnel issues to detailed policy explanations, these directives soon became a foundational component of program delivery for the new department. By January 1952, they were consolidated into a loose-leaf manual of "Instructions for the Guidance of Immigration and Visa Officers." Officers were notified that the manual would serve as the "official reference book of headquarters instructions" in future.¹⁸

Policy initiatives of a more substantive nature also followed the minister's June 1950 announcement, as the government continued to seek policies that would increase immigration levels. A September order in council revoked earlier restrictions applicable to wartime 'enemy aliens': now, under P.C. 4364 "Germans were placed on the same basis as other Europeans."¹⁹ And there was more. A 1951 departmental memorandum, summarizing recent policy developments, explained that a "thorough revision of admission procedures" had been implemented under P.C. 2856, to "reduce formalities to a minimum and to expedite the arrival of immigrants sponsored by residents ... or selected by immigration and settlement officials." The Department's "Settlement Service" had also been strengthened, resulting in the development of "thousands of opportunities for the placement of immigrants."²⁰

Two additional initiatives emerged during the Department's first year of operation. The first involved a series of measures to provide financial assistance to prospective immigrants. An October 1950 Cabinet memorandum summarized a disturbing decline in intake from 125,414 in 1948 to a projected total of 75,000 for 1950. The cost of passage to Canada was identified as a major factor in the decline, and it did not help that Australia – a country also in need of immigrants – had implemented a generous assisted-passage program. Traditionally, the memorandum noted, the government did not offer financial incentives to prospective immigrants, but under the current circumstances, "it appears that the principle of providing no financial assistance has to be departed from to some extent at least."²¹

¹⁷ LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, vol. 940/41, Binder 28, "H.Q. Directives Series C – 1950-52" Immigration Branch Directive No. 69, December 15, 1950.

¹⁸ LAC Immigration Branch Files, RG 76, vol. 940/41, "H.Q. Directives Series C – 1950-52" Directive No. 120 (Untitled) January 15, 1952. A list appended to this directive identified 900 Immigration Branch employees to whom a copy of the manual would be issued.

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 99. (Hawkins notes that the classification of Japanese nationals as "enemy aliens" would continue until 1952.)

²⁰ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Files, RG 26, vol. 75, File 1-1-1 part 1, "*The Department of Citizenship and Immigration*," March 1951, 3.

²¹ LAC Department of Agriculture Fonds, RG17, vol. 3091, file 49-1, "*Draft – Memorandum To The Cabinet*", October 30, 1950, 1.

On October 31, 1950, an Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Immigration held its first meeting, to consider the possible components of an assistance program.²² Chaired by Laval Fortier, the list of attendees demonstrated the committee's importance. John Holmes of External Affairs accompanied his department's deputy under-secretary, Escott Reid. Also present were Cabinet Secretary Norman Robertson, and the deputy ministers or senior officials from Finance, Agriculture, Labour, and National Health and Welfare. Among the measures considered were proposals to charter transatlantic vessels from Britain and airplanes from Trans-Canada Airlines. An IRO request to accept 1,000 'hard-core' tubercular refugees – to be funded through a reduction of Canada's contributions to that organization – was debated at length with little enthusiasm and with no recommendation being reached. The most significant initiative appeared to originate with the Department of Labour, whose officials proposed a scheme whereby "advances on passages would be made by the two Canadian railway companies provided the Government were prepared to make funds available for this purpose at low rates."²³

The Department of Labour, committee members learned, had determined that projected domestic employment figures for 1950-51 were exceptionally promising. In fact, shortages were now anticipated in requirements for "skilled tradesmen and certain other types of workers," which meant that for this year "the usual restriction on winter entry of immigrants could be relaxed." The department also outlined a proposal whereby low-rate fares would be made available to immigrants coming to fill particular labour-market needs, as "skilled tradesmen" or as "girls for domestic service." Continuing shortages in northern lumber camps could be addressed by securing men still residing in European displaced persons camps "to provide a reserve pool of manpower for general labour."²⁴

Canada's first postwar assisted-passage program was implemented with remarkable speed. Harris explained the plan to Parliament on March 19, 1951, noting that it had begun to operate the previous December. Under a modest fare-subsidy program, offered to 1,750 people for 1951-2, the government would contribute the difference between a standard tourist-class ticket by ship and the current air-fare price, a difference of \$215. Trans-Canada Airlines, Harris explained, was now operating regular overseas

²² LAC Department of Agriculture Fonds, RG17, vol. 3091, file 49-1, "*Secret – Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Immigration*", October, 31, 1950, 1. According to these minutes, the government's "Interdepartmental Committee on External Trade Policy" had identified a need for this new committee, to be tasked with "recommending to Cabinet a plan to bring about a reduction in ... cost ... for immigrants moving from Europe to Canada."

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴ LAC Department of Agriculture Fonds, RG17, vol. 3091, file 49-1, "*Draft – Memorandum To The Cabinet*", October 30, 1950, 3. A fourth recommendation proposed the importation of 50 immigrants per month from Malta during the winter. No explanation was provided for this particular recommendation except that "the Maltese government pays transportation costs to hostels in Canada." *Ibid.*, 3.

flights, and unsold seats presented an opportunity to try out the idea.²⁵ Later, the minister introduced a supply item to establish an account in the government's consolidated revenue fund from which loans could be advanced for passage money. This too was a modest scheme (even though the minister requested approval of \$3,000,000 to establish its operating account). Prospective immigrants would contribute the first \$30 toward their fare, with the balance – approximately \$200 – to be received as a loan from the government: “The loan of passage money will be repayable by arrangement with the immigrant and his employer by deduction from his wages over a period of twelve months in some cases but in no case to exceed twenty-four months.”

There were additional limits to the program's largesse. Loans were available to single workers or the “head” of a family but not to other family members. The assisted passage loan plan was approved without debate. In December 1951, Harris advised the House that 6202 immigrants had received assisted passage loans during the year.²⁶

The other first-year initiative under the new department appeared even more modest in scope. Agreements negotiated with the governments of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon allowed for the admission of 150, 100, and 50 citizens annually from each of those countries. Here again, international concerns factored prominently in the initiative, which had percolated for years before any action was taken. The idea originated with Indian representatives to the 1945 Commonwealth Relations Conference in London. Long resentful of discriminatory Canadian immigration practices, Indian delegates suggested to their Canadian counterparts a treaty agreement “which would incorporate the principle of mutuality, on the clear understanding that it really wouldn't extend at all [the] present restriction or prohibition of immigration by indirect means.”²⁷

The precise meaning of this obtuse rationale is unclear, but it seemed to affirm that the arrangement represented a goodwill gesture which the government and people of India would nevertheless “tremendously appreciate.” Years later, the always candid J. W. Pickersgill described the arrangement as simply “a gesture for the improvement of commonwealth relations”²⁸. So it was, and the miniscule numbers negotiated for each of the countries seem almost farcical in retrospect. Corbett's contemporary appraisal of the program remains the most generous and – perhaps – balanced, in its

²⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1951: II, 1413.

²⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1951, 2nd Session: II, 1509.

²⁷ This passage is excerpted from a letter from E.J. Tarr of the Canadian Institute for International Affairs, a delegate to the Commonwealth Conference, to Norman Robertson, 26 March, 1945; see Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, 242.

²⁸ Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on Estimates, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 11, March 14, 1955, 301. (Quoted in Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 101.)

assessment. “The quotas,” Corbett wrote, were “obviously small” but they represented “a privilege which these countries had not previously had, namely the ability to have accepted ... certain small numbers of persons who do not fall within the category of spouses, or unmarried sons or daughters under twenty one years, of Canadian citizens.”²⁹

By early 1952, nearly seven years had passed since the end of the war, and five years since Mackenzie King had articulated a new approach to immigration policy. As we have seen, two major initiatives had been contemplated but not pursued. Only a limited assisted-passage program and small admission quotas for non-white Commonwealth member states had been implemented. These were modest accomplishments indeed for a new department with a young, vigorous minister, and a government which now understood fully the country’s need for immigrants. Neither the decline in intake in 1949-50, nor the Labour Department’s projected employment figures for the following year had provoked dramatic action. Economic analyses now frequently advocated for increased immigration. As early as 1939, deputy finance minister Clifford Clark confided to Dexter that “he would throw open the door to refugees, particularly those with a bit of money.”³⁰ Writing in 1944, University of Manitoba economist W.J. Waines acknowledged that “there is already evidence of a considerable body of opinion in Canada favourable to a policy of large-scale immigration after the war.”³¹ And by 1950, K.W. Taylor seemed to have evolved from his earlier, unfavourable views, writing: “If the world can escape a cataclysmic war, the prospects for a great increase in productivity of human labour for the next fifty years seem assured.” Among the available options for realizing this potential capacity, Taylor acknowledged, was “more people.”³² Clearly, economic thinking was moving beyond the restrictive views of earlier times championed by Arthur Lower and others. Proponents of a more imaginative policy were prominent and influential, yet the government was still not roused to decisive action.

Explanations for this postwar torpor may begin with the immigration department’s first minister. Young, capable, and ambitious, Walter Harris was a rising star in the Liberal party. He was one of only two sitting MPs to see wartime service overseas, and the only one wounded in action. In 1947 Harris became parliamentary secretary to External Affairs minister Louis St. Laurent, and continued in that capacity after St. Laurent became prime minister. Previously, he chaired a parliamentary committee

²⁹ Corbett, *Canada’s Immigration Policy*, 29.

³⁰ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 2, File 16, “Correspondence – General, 1939 July – Dec., “Memo – July 12, 1939.”

³¹ W. J. Waines, “Post-War Immigration Policy”, 87. (A copy of this article was found in QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series IV – Subject Files, Box 20, File 197 “Immigration – 1929-57 etc.” Waines went on to argue against increased immigration, reflecting perhaps the conservatism of the publication in which this article appeared.)

³² K.W. Taylor, “Some Aspects of Population History,” 313. Taylor’s earlier views are discussed in Ch. 2, above, at p. 42.

tasked with designing a suitable Canadian flag, (which Mackenzie King had promised during the 1945 election.)³³ The committee's failure to reach a decision seems not to have damaged him politically.

Harris was an upright Ontario Baptist. Born at Kimberley in 1904, he was raised and educated in Toronto, graduating from Osgoode Hall in 1926. An interest in politics developed early when as a youth he attended political meetings and heard campaign speeches by Ontario Liberal leader Hartley Dewart and federal leader Mackenzie King.³⁴ As a young lawyer, he returned to Grey County to establish a base for both a legal and political career. He was elected to the House of Commons in 1940, defeating Agnes Macphail, the first woman elected to Parliament, in the riding of Grey-Bruce. After his return from overseas, Harris became something of a protégé of Mackenzie King, whom he greatly admired. (His early parliamentary statements as immigration minister reiterated the policy principles set forth by King in 1947.³⁵) Following his appointment to Cabinet, Harris emerged as a potential party leader and prime minister. "Harris," observed journalist Bruce Hutchison, "is a very tough guy, and utterly realistic." At forty-six, he thought himself too young for the party leadership in 1952 but "sees a chance if he has a few more years to ripen," (and if St. Laurent could be persuaded to stay on beyond another election). "I see no big mind in him," Hutchison summarized rather condescendingly, "but a very keen mind which explores all details and dredges to the bottom of all subjects."³⁶

Walter Harris' legal training – as much as his background and temperament – would have instilled respect for and adherence to rules. When combined with his evident political ambition, these traits mitigated against bold initiatives that might bring political risk at this early stage of his career. Despite his relative youth, however, Harris lacked neither confidence nor self-assurance. After a May 1950 trip to Bermuda, the prime minister forwarded correspondence from a taxi driver he had met who enquired about coming to Canada. "I promised him," St. Laurent explained, "that if he wrote to me ... I would pass on to you the information he had given me."³⁷ The immigration minister's response was brief and unequivocal. The driver and his family were "not admissible under the present regulations.... I am sorry that I cannot at this time transmit a more favourable reply."³⁸ An apologetic prime minister was left

³³ LAC Peter Stursburg Fonds, R5637, Vol. 51, *Stursburg/Harris Interview*, July 25, 1979, 58-9.

³⁴ Harris interview with the author, July 17, 1980.

³⁵ See Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: II, 1763: "The aim of the immigration branch is to promote an increase in the population of Canada of carefully selected, readily assimilated immigrants within the absorptive capacity of the country."

³⁶ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-61, Vol. 6, File 41, "Correspondence – General 1952 Jan. – May" Hutchison to Dexter, January 30, 1952.

³⁷ LAC Louis St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, Volume 96, FileD-55-S, "Department of Citizenship and Immigration – Mr. St. Laurent's Signature." St. Laurent to Harris, May 1, 1950.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Harris to St. Laurent, August 4, 1950.

to convey the disappointing news to the “coloured” taxi driver.³⁹ Rules were to be followed, without exception.

A mixture of economic and political concerns also presented impediments to bold policy initiative. An expanding economy and positive employment numbers were conditions favourable to immigration. But the possibility of a recession was also a concern, and would cause difficulty if a substantial commitment to immigration had been made publicly, or if unemployment increased at a time when immigration levels were high. Moreover, there were no assurances that any target numbers could actually be achieved. Harris was aware by early 1952 that immigration levels from Europe were once again declining. “The reason is not Canadian,” Bruce Hutchison reported, “but lack of immigrants. Germany has got rid of most of its available immigrants and there seems to be less enthusiasm for immigration in Europe anyway.”⁴⁰ A renewed commitment to recruitment in Britain seemed the safest response.

A third obstacle was purely political. “Pickersgill came here yesterday,” Hutchison confided to Grant Dexter in April 1952, “and we had a long and private talk.” (Pickersgill was now Clerk of the Privy Council and cabinet secretary, supposedly a less political position than his previous role in the prime minister’s office. He may have considered this conversation private; Hutchison evidently did not!) “The government,” Hutchison reported, “will very likely go to the country in October, 1952.” Only three years had passed since the last election, but several of the government’s key ministers had been discussing an “early leap.... Jack is confident that this decision will be made within the next few weeks.”

Hutchison then summarized the strategic reasons for this “surprising decision”:

- (1) The Liberal Party can certainly win this year. The latest Gallup Poll shows its popularity up to 48 per cent only two points below the 1949 high and two points up from last fall. This is due mainly to the old age pension.
- (2) Prosperity is guaranteed for this summer anyway but is not guaranteed for 1953. The government today is finding its economists split clearly in their opinion of the future. One school holds that high government spending in the U.S. will assure a boom condition indefinitely. The other school replies that ... the economy of North America, with its huge productive capacity, will soon find itself in a surplus, with consequent price falls and perhaps unemployment and substantial recession. Even if these predictions are too pessimistic, the politicians reason that they had better take the bird in hand and win this year when they can be assured of winning rather than take a chance on a changed economic climate in 1953.
- (3) The over-riding reason, however, relates solely to Mr. St. Laurent. His problem, as they put it in a charming phrase, is to “dis-engage.” In other words, he is determined to get out as soon as possible.... If he is re-elected in October he could quit in 18 months or less and thus give himself more time at the end of his life for himself.

³⁹ Ibid., St. Laurent to Leon R. Sherlock, September 5, 1950.

⁴⁰ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-61, Vol. 6, File 41, “Correspondence – General 1952 Jan. – May” Hutchison to Dexter, January 30, 1952.

... In short, the big job is to hold Mr. St. Laurent for another election and to hold it quick to make sure he does not escape before the polls open.⁴¹

So there it was. Enlightened economic analysis might posit that population growth through immigration stimulated economic expansion and increased employment,⁴² but political considerations still mattered most. All politicians, one journalist concluded, “thought, and had good reason to think, that immigration was unpopular with the voters.”⁴³ Gallup polls in the early 1950s revealed the same public antipathy toward immigration as they had demonstrated after the war.⁴⁴ Polling data on this topic may not have been mentioned during Pickersgill’s conversation with Hutchison, but surely would have been known to the government.

Hutchison’s account of his conversation with the Clerk of the Privy Council continued. What about an election issue, he asked. The opposition’s recent behaviour would provide one, Pickersgill assured him. The Conservatives’ “blockading in Parliament” would be seized upon to create “an emergency of convenience”:

If they are left alone they will increase their obstruction, little business will be done in Parliament and by July the public business will be in a shambles. At that point the government can virtuously rise in its place and announce that this disaster to the public’s business cannot be allowed to continue.

Some “extra gimmicks,” Pickersgill continued, might also be included in the clever plan:

[The Liberals] are thinking of introducing into the election a final drive to tidy up the constitution along the lines on which Garson has been working – division of powers, etc. ... St. Laurent being French is the only P.M. who can hope to sell this to Quebec in the next thirty years. ... It would be the apex of his career.

Hutchison concluded his remarkable summary by noting that although “dry” constitutional matters might not excite many voters, they “would at least make the election look respectable.”⁴⁵

Whether Pickersgill was discussing serious plans, testing ideas, or simply musing hypothetically with a friendly journalist, there was no early election call in 1952, and perhaps not too much should be

⁴¹ Ibid., Hutchison to Dexter, April 21, 1952.

⁴² See, for example, Timlin, *Does Canada Need More People?* Timlin’s analysis is discussed above in Ch. 1, 12-3.

⁴³ Fraser, *The Search for Identity*, 114-5. “The fear of unemployment,” Fraser noted, “was almost obsessive.... Even in 1954, when mass immigration had been resumed for six years, a Gallup Poll showed less than a majority in favor of it – and a solid majority *against* it in French-speaking Quebec.”

⁴⁴ For discussions of earlier postwar polling data see Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace*, 97-8 and Gilmour, “The Kind of People Canada Wants,” 107-8.

⁴⁵ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-61, Vol. 6, File 41, “Correspondence – General 1952 Jan. – May” Hutchison to Dexter, January 30, 1952.

made of the cynical political strategy he divulged. An election would soon come, in 1953. Meanwhile, however, the combination of increasingly uncertain economic conditions, and divided public opinion on immigration, decreed that this was no time to risk the political embarrassment which bold or publicized immigration initiatives could cause. *Saturday Night* editor B.K. Sandwell sardonically summarized the government's immigration strategy as of 1952:

An official can always get into trouble for letting someone into – or out of – his country when he could have refused to let him in. He never gets into trouble for refusing to let him in or out when he could have let him in.

Immigration rules, Sandwell concluded, were usually applied in “the most restrictive possible sense.”⁴⁶

For these reasons, the government's immigration strategy during the early 1950s studiously avoided publicizing its activities in this policy area. Gradually, however, opposition questions grew more focused, and criticism began to strike targets. In one 1949 exchange, the prime minister responded to questions tabled by John Diefenbaker: How many orders in council had the government issued under the *Immigration Act* since July 1947, and of the total, how many had not been published or tabled? There had been 121 in total, St. Laurent replied, of which ten were published in the *Canada Gazette* and none were tabled. He proceeded to table all 121 orders. Then, perhaps sensing that these statistics did not look good, St. Laurent presented a detailed overview of the Act and its policy history. It was important to understand how Canada's immigration laws were administered “not only [by] this government but all proceeding governments.”⁴⁷

The prime minister explained that the *Immigration Act* identified certain “prohibited classes” but did not specifically define admissible immigrants by category or class. Among those prohibited from entering Canada were categories of people enumerated in the legislation since 1910: the physically or mentally defective, criminals, persons ‘opposed’ to organized government, spies, and so on. By contrast, the classes of “persons who are from time to time deemed admissible” were ordinarily identified by order-in-council. The reason for this “arrangement,” St. Laurent explained, was simple. It was designed “to provide a certain flexibility which would not be possible if every changing circumstance had to be met by an amendment to the act.” The ability to revise the regulations by way of order-in-council provided the flexibility “without which the whole administration of the Immigration Act would be so rigid as to be practically unworkable.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sandwell, “It's Easy for Officials,” 5.

⁴⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1949: II, 1378-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1378.

The prime minister directly addressed the large number of orders-in-council that had not been published. Diefenbaker, he noted, had accused the government of using secret orders to create “an underground railway by which thousands of aliens are entering the country, completely by-passing the Immigration Act.” Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, St. Laurent explained,

When an order in council is of a general character, changing the regulations or affecting categories of persons, that order is published in the Canada Gazette. On the other hand, when the order in council deals with groups ... or specific individuals, it is normally considered to be of interest only to the persons immediately concerned and it is not published. Information about it, however, can be obtained by application to the immigration branch.⁴⁹

There was a hint of exasperation in St. Laurent’s remarks on this occasion, but for the most part he was precise and diplomatic in describing his government’s approach to immigration policy. There was, he insisted, nothing new or mysterious about it. He refuted any suggestion of ‘secrecy’ in the immigration program (although as we have seen, the avoidance of publicity was becoming apparent). The current system had been in place for decades, setting the procedures by which “the government – not only this government but all preceding governments – have administered the exceptions under the regulations for the admission of immigrants.”⁵⁰ Most recently, the initiative bringing thousands of displaced persons to Canada was authorized by orders in council. Allegations of nefarious under-currents to the program were simply unfounded – “a complete distortion of the facts.”

Diefenbaker, however, showed no interest in the prime minister’s response to his questions. His point had been made. “An order in council is secret,” he insisted, “when members of parliament have no knowledge of it unless they get in touch with the proper office and ask for its production.”⁵¹ He concluded grandiosely:

The tabling of these orders by the Prime Minister and the attitude he has shown in the last two or three days is a victory for the cause of the restoration to parliament of its right to know what is being done.⁵²

Alleged Liberal abuse of the rights of Parliament would become a prominent and effective theme in later opposition attacks on the government, particularly during the years prior to the 1957 election. This early reference to the issue in 1949 demonstrates that Diefenbaker was beginning to formulate that strategy.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1379.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1378.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1380

⁵² Ibid., 1379.

In December 1949, Conservative leader George Drew raised a new issue when he decried a lack of “adequate assistance” provided to newcomers. Improvements were needed in the procedures and information provided to prospective immigrants at overseas offices. Even more importantly,

When they arrive here it is not enough that they simply be handed booklets telling of our currency provisions, giving a map of the country, and certain explanations of our habits and customs. It is essential that we set up an effective mechanism to really help these people find themselves in places where they can get the kind of work for which they are suited.⁵³

In support of this criticism, Drew cited examples of near-disastrous incidents where immigrants had been left to their own devices in remote lumbering and mining camps in extreme weather conditions. More attention to these issues, Drew concluded, would improve the transition process. It would also prevent any “poisoning” of immigrants by “communist doctrines” (another concern frequently raised by the Conservative leader⁵⁴).

Drew’s remarks, unlike Diefenbaker’s, seemed at least somewhat constructive in their intent. Hansard recorded no response to them by the government – an indication, perhaps, of a degree of complacency entering into the government’s attitude toward this policy area.

Meanwhile, opposition members (and some from the government backbench) continued to criticize. Immigration, it seemed, was becoming a topic from which good news, and good press coverage, were increasingly difficult to extract. In his April 1950 summary to Parliament, Harris noted that some 379,000 immigrants had arrived between 1945 and 1949, of whom 173,000 came from Britain and 42,000 from the US. Canada’s response to the refugee crisis had brought a further 98,000 ‘displaced persons’ from Europe. These were significant achievements, Harris affirmed, and “with few exceptions, the encouragement of immigration to Canada has public support.”⁵⁵ He acknowledged differing opinions regarding the impact of immigration on employment levels, but concluded that recent experience “would seem to indicate that employment has been aided by immigration.”⁵⁶ Still, parliamentarians complained. Thatcher of the CCF decried the “maddeningly slow” development of a coherent policy since the war.⁵⁷ Liberal David Croll found no new policy, but instead a government that “hesitates, falters and stumbles.”⁵⁸ Knowles demanded an explanation for the continued restrictions on Chinese immigration, whose levels remained conspicuously low despite the repeal of the *Chinese Immigration Act* several years

⁵³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1949: III, 2600.

⁵⁴ For examples of Drew’s allegations concerning the government’s response to ‘subversive activities’ see Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St Laurent*, 146-9.

⁵⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: II, 1764.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1768.

⁵⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1950: IV, 3585.

earlier.⁵⁹ Conservatives Diefenbaker and Davie Fulton also persisted, but offered little in the way of new insight or constructive advice. What was the government doing, Fulton asked, to encourage more immigration from Britain?⁶⁰ Increasingly, some aspects of immigration policy were causing embarrassment.

On June 2, 1952 Walter Harris presented an innocuous motion that Parliament “go into committee” to consider “a measure respecting immigration to amend, consolidate, and clarify the Immigration Act.”⁶¹ Vaguely, almost in passing, he alluded to some of the proposed revisions, including loans for immigrant transportation costs and living expenses while en route. It was a strange tactical approach, and it provoked a torrent of comments and questions as irritated MPs sought to understand what exactly they were being asked to discuss in committee. Was there to be a new Act? Did the minister have a statement to make? Having endured the barrage, Harris introduced Bill 305 “respecting immigration” for first reading. It was still not clear whether the draft legislation proposed minor amendments to the existing (1910) *Immigration Act*, or a new statute. The minister promised more information in committee, and his motion was finally passed.⁶²

Eight days later on June 10, Harris presented the bill for second reading, now identifying it as “an act respecting immigration.” This time he offered a detailed statement, describing the bill as “the first revision since 1910 of the Immigration Act.”⁶³ The new version, he explained, “retains the principles of the present act and modernizes those principles.” If implemented, the new statute “would enable this department to function more efficiently and effectively in the light of present-day conditions.”⁶⁴ Harris then summarized the proposed legislation.

The basic structure of the act would be unchanged. As before, there would be provisions to define prohibited ‘classes’ of persons, and authorizing the governor-in-council to control via regulation the admission of all others. The new act would also identify persons “by law entitled to enter Canada,” such as Canadian citizens and those with Canadian domicile.⁶⁵ The sections dealing with prohibited classes, however, would be revised to more comprehensively define those excluded by reason of their engagement in subversive activities. The 1919 language aimed at post-World War I ‘subversives’ would be updated to exclude any immigrant “who engages in activities prejudicial” to Canada’s duties under the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3694.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3681.

⁶¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: III, 2800.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2814.

⁶³ This was a curious remark, given the substantial amendments implemented in 1919. See above, Ch. 2, 28-30.

⁶⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: III, 3074.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

United Nations charter, or NATO, or any other “instruments for collective defence.”⁶⁶ A second amendment in this area sought to relax (rather than tighten) restrictions imposed on prospective immigrants with past criminal convictions. Harris noted that there had been cases involving the exclusion of persons who had made ‘mistakes,’ paid their penalty, and been rehabilitated, but were nevertheless denied admission. This had led to less-than-desirable outcomes in some instances, including the separation of families. The government had decided that “the absolute prohibition against admissibility under these circumstances should be modified.”⁶⁷

Other changes also reflected humanitarian motives. There was clarification regarding the acquisition and loss of Canadian domicile, a distinct but important status because of its relationship to qualification for citizenship. New rules in this area would permit ‘landed’ status to be granted to persons who had been in Canada ‘temporarily’ and without formal legal status, after a period of at least ten years.⁶⁸

Modifications to the statute’s appeal provisions were among the most substantive changes. Current procedures to appeal a deportation order provided for a board of inquiry consisting of three officers, following which a further appeal could be taken to the minister. Convening the three-person boards of inquiry, however, had frequently caused costly delays. New provisions would allow for such inquiries to be conducted by a single board member, retaining the three-member format at “busier ports of entry.” In some cases, the minister’s ‘final’ appeal authority would also be delegated to the panel. Harris explained the government’s belief that these changes would reduce delay and ensure swifter decisions – an administrative improvement, perhaps, although hardly an enhancement to the process of natural justice. A related revision applied to the detention of immigrants pending the outcome of their appeal from an order of deportation. Former rules had required detention at a Canadian facility; now, the Act would allow for the immigrant to be returned “to the place whence he came pending a decision on his appeal.”⁶⁹ This, too, was clearly designed as an administrative improvement, reducing ‘accommodation’ costs to the government. The minister did not point out the other obvious benefit to this amendment, at least from his perspective: an immigrant who had been removed from Canada could still be denied re-entry on any number of grounds, even if his or her appeal was successful!)

One significant provision which Harris did not mention in his overview was the new section 51. As with most enforcement statutes, the *Immigration Act* identified a series of offences subject to criminal

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3075.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 3075-6.

prosecution, and the range of penalties that could be imposed upon conviction.⁷⁰ For example, section 50 subjected to fine or imprisonment any immigrant or would-be immigrant convicted of entering the country fraudulently or with false documentation, or attempting to enter through bribery. The new section 51, however, created a series of prosecutable offences specifically applicable to immigration officers and persons who dealt with them. These new provisions identified the issuance of “any false document” or the acceptance of “any bribe or other improper remuneration or benefit” as offences for which officers were subject to prosecution. The penalties, moreover, were substantial; any person convicted under this section could face a fine of \$5000 and up to five years’ imprisonment.⁷¹

This new section responded to a messy situation uncovered earlier in the year within the Department’s overseas operations. Several immigration officers operating in Germany and Italy were discovered to have accepted bribes to issue fraudulent visas. An Ottawa newspaper broke the story in February 1952, and *Maclean’s Magazine* followed on March 15 with a sensational account by Blair Fraser, replete with allegations of “bribery, blackmail and a beautiful blonde seductress” who allegedly offered an immigration officer “her virtue” in return for false visas.⁷² Media reports exaggerated the extent of the problem; the number of false visas may have totaled in the “dozens, perhaps hundreds.” And as Fraser reluctantly acknowledged, government investigators determined that there had been no “gorgeous blonde;” the hapless officer had simply “issued visas on a commercial basis.”⁷³ The story was nevertheless embarrassing, and it was evident that many would-be immigrants had also been defrauded by unscrupulous travel agents.

The government moved to defuse the scandal before it became public, terminating the employment of four immigration officers. Conservative Davie Fulton had raised the issue in Parliament

⁷⁰ In earlier versions of the *Immigration Act*, ‘offences and penalties’ provisions tended to be dispersed throughout the statute. Under the 1910 Act, for example, conviction for “failure to answer truthfully” a question of an immigration officer could bring a fine of up to \$100 and two months’ imprisonment, and carriers harbouring prohibited immigrants could be fined up to \$500 and imprisoned for six months: *Immigration Act*, R.S.C. 1927, Vol. II, Ch. 93, subsections 33.2 and 33.8. “General” penalty provisions had also been less elaborate and less severe, establishing nominal penalties upon conviction for contravention of provisions “in respect of which ... no other penalty is provided by this Act.” (Ibid., sections 77-9.) Historically, *Immigration Act* prosecutions were exceedingly rare, deportation or the denial of entry providing the expedient solution for most ‘problem’ cases. The general ‘offences and penalties’ provisions of the new section 50 were much more typical of modern enforcement legislation.

⁷¹ *The Immigration Act*, 1 Eliz. II. Chapter 42, subsection 51(1).

⁷² An editorial in the *Ottawa Journal* reported corruption in the Immigration Department’s offices in Karlsruhe Germany: see “Immigration by fraud” *Ottawa Journal*, February 21, 1952. (I was not able to locate this article; Conservative leader George Drew referred to it in Parliament on July 4, 1952: see Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: IV, 4276-7.) The *Maclean’s* article focused on corruption in the Department’s Rome office. See Fraser, “How Racketeers Sold Entry Into Canada,” 10-11.

⁷³ Ibid., 11.

on April 23, and he raised it again now, as Harris presented the new act for second reading, demanding “disclosure ... of the names of those who have taken part” in the racket.⁷⁴ Harris responded curtly that an investigation into the matter was ongoing; further details would be released when it was complete, “particularly if prosecutions are launched.”⁷⁵ The problem, however, was that the law currently provided no remedy for this scenario, either by criminal prosecution or otherwise. As Fraser noted, terminating the employment of the offending officers was the only recourse currently available to the government. The alleged improprieties had occurred outside Canada, “and the Criminal Code’s writ does not run in Italy. The Immigration Act carries no penalties for irregularities by immigration officers.” Fraser predicted that this legislative deficiency would soon be addressed, as it was by inclusion of the new section 51.

Like its predecessor, many of the 1952 *Immigration Act*’s key provisions were exclusionary in nature. Section 5 catalogued the “prohibited classes” of immigrants. While some terminology was updated from the 1910 Act, the list itself was longer and more detailed. The old ‘subversive’ and ‘enemy alien’ categories were now described more exhaustively to include various forms of treason, espionage, and acts of sabotage toward Canada or its allies.⁷⁶ The category of those excluded on various physical or ‘moral’ grounds was also expanded. Prostitutes, pimps, “chronic alcoholics” and “professional beggars or vagrants” all remained, of course, but now added to the list were suspected drug users and traffickers, and homosexuals.⁷⁷ Further exclusionary powers appeared in section 61, which set out the government’s regulation-making powers under the Act. Here the racist statutory devices of earlier times were still maintained, authorizing the government by regulation to impose “literacy” tests or “other examinations,” and to invoke the “continuous journey” criteria that had so effectively excluded immigrants from Asian countries in earlier decades.⁷⁸ The section’s final and most important provision incorporated the language of Order in Council P.C. 2856, which Harris had introduced in 1950, into the statute. Subsection 61(g) authorized the government to make regulations “prohibiting or limiting ... admission” on any of the following grounds:

- (i) nationality, citizenship, ethnic group, occupation, class or geographical area of origin,
- (ii) peculiar customs, habits, modes of life or methods of holding property,
- (iii) unsuitability having regard to the climatic, economic, social, industrial, educational, labour, health or other conditions or requirements existing, temporarily or otherwise, in Canada or in the area or country from or through which such persons come to Canada, or

⁷⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: III, 2802.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2805.

⁷⁶ *The Immigration Act*, 1 Elizabeth II. Chapter 42, subsections 5 (l)-(n).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, subsections 5 (a)-(c) and (e)-(k). Sexual activity between persons of the same gender had been prohibited under various criminal statutes, including Canada’s first *Criminal Code*: See *The Criminal Code*, 1892 55-56 Vict., Chapter 29, sections 174 (“buggery”) and 178 (“gross indecency”). With this history, it is surprising that earlier immigration legislation did not explicitly bar homosexual immigrants.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, subsections 61 (b) and (d).

- (iv) probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their admission.⁷⁹

Those seeking assurance that the new act would introduce no significant change to immigration policy needed look no further than this section. Over a year would pass before a regulation was promulgated under this new section. In September 1954, Order-in-Council P.C. 1954 set out a series of preferential rules under the euphemistic heading “Norms of Admissibility.”⁸⁰

Bill 305 moved through the House of Commons and the Senate with remarkable speed. When he introduced the bill, and at second reading on June 10, Harris asked members to confine their discussion to the administrative changes reflected in its provisions. A general debate on immigration policy, he suggested, could wait until estimates for his department came before the house later in the session. Members agreed, especially after receiving Harris’ assurance in response to Toronto Conservative Donald Fleming’s caution that the estimates debate must allow for “the most complete expression of view on any section of the bill.”⁸¹ On June 13, the House approved a motion for the creation of a special committee to consider the bill. Among its 35 members were long-time immigration advocates Ross Thatcher and David Croll, and emerging Conservative critics Fulton and Fleming.⁸² Ten days later, on June 23, the bill was before the House again. After a brief debate to incorporate agreed-upon amendments, it was “reported, read the third time, and passed.”⁸³ Passage through the Senate was even faster. Presenting the bill for second reading on June 25, Senator J.G. Turgeon noted that the Senate’s Standing Committee in Immigration and Labour had been “able to discuss in detail the subject matter of the measure before the bill itself actually reached this chamber.”⁸⁴ One day later, the Standing Committee’s report was tabled. The committee had “examined the bill, and now beg leave to report the same without any amendment.” Without further ado, Bill 305 was given third reading on June 26, 1952, and passed.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Ibid., subsections 61 (g) (i)-(iv).

⁸⁰ Canada, *Statutory Orders and Regulations, Consolidation 1955*, P.C. 1954-1351, section 20, 1865-6. After identifying the usual ‘preferred’ immigrant classes (British, American, and French) the provision restricted Asian immigrants to the spouses and children under 21 years of age of Canadian residents. Another limited exception was made for countries with existing treaty agreements. All others would continue to be excluded through broad administrative criteria on such bases as “peculiar customs, habits,” ‘unsuitable’ conditions within their country of origin, or their “probable inability to become readily assimilated.” The regulation thus generally mirrored the statutory language.

⁸¹ Ibid., 3077. Fleming reiterated the request on June 23; see Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: IV, 3588.

⁸² Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: III, 3193.

⁸³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: IV, 3592.

⁸⁴ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, Session 1952, 511.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 512.

The opportunity to debate immigration policy – which opposition members had so pointedly requested – arrived on July 4, as parliament considered the annual estimates for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. It was the final day of the 1952 session, and any urgency the opposition had attached to the subject had evidently dissipated. A few backbenchers raised old concerns; neither Fleming nor Fulton participated in the review. As the proceedings concluded, an obviously satisfied immigration minister summarized recent developments. Nineteen fifty-one, he began, had been “the largest and most successful immigrant year since the war.” In addition, the postwar period had seen “almost unanimous approval” for the admission of displaced European refugees, as “everyone recognized that Canada could only grow substantially if it grew by taking immigrants.” The celebration continued: Canadians had “generally agreed” with an expansive immigration policy to ensure the continued development of “our great resources.” Parliamentarians, Harris concluded, had also been entirely supportive: “The debates of 1945-6-7-8 show clearly that parliament was almost unanimous in its belief that immigration as a policy was desirable.” In particular, “everything which could have been done ... to stimulate immigration” during the preceding year, had been done.⁸⁶

This was simply an astonishing series of assertions. As we have seen, the evidence most certainly does not indicate unanimous postwar support for immigration either publicly or in the media. With so little publicity given to any initiatives, it is unlikely that the “general agreement” Harris described reflected much more than uninformed public silence. (Even the DP initiative had been undertaken quietly, fearing backlash.) Nor does the parliamentary record demonstrate any such unanimity as the minister now portrayed. Walter Harris was not ordinarily given to effusion or exaggeration, and his remarks on this occasion seem out of character. Perhaps the smooth passage of the new *Immigration Act*, or the pending summer recess explained his expansive mood. More likely, however, the minister’s narrative on this occasion represented an attempt to frame the immigration debate in future by re-interpreting its past.

In retrospect, it is difficult to discern a precise rationale for the ‘new’ 1952 *Immigration Act*. The minutes of Cabinet discussions on the issue offer little insight, recording only a brief consideration of the draft legislation on May 8 and again on May 30, when it was approved for introduction.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: IV, 4263-4.

⁸⁷ *Cabinet Conclusions*, Item No. 11961, “Legislation - Immigration Act.” May 8, 1952, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2650, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 2. Also see *Cabinet Conclusions*, Item No. 12037, May 30, 1952, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2650, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368.

Historians have paid little attention to the uninspiring 1952 statute, describing its changes as mainly administrative in nature, as indeed most were.⁸⁸ Contemporary journalists seemed generally disinterested. Newspaper accounts – of which there were few – focused on the new section 51, quickly connecting the revisions with “instances of racketeering uncovered earlier this year,” the issue which the government particularly hoped would not attract attention.⁸⁹ A proclamation date of June 1, 1953,⁹⁰ almost a year after the Act’s date of passage, seemed to further demonstrate the lack of urgency with which the government regarded the entire subject. (Effusive coverage of the coronation of Elizabeth II on June 1, 1953 would also ensure that the coming into force of the new Act received scant media attention.)

The minister’s only parliamentary explanation for this legislative initiative was his observation at second reading that the former *Immigration Act* had been in place since 1910. *Canada Year Book* editions for 1952-3 and 1954 made no mention of the new legislation in their annual summaries of immigration developments.⁹¹ (The 1955 edition referred in passing to the “recently revised” statute.⁹²) In 1958, fully five years after proclamation, the *Year Book* finally offered a bland rationale: “The Immigration Act of 1952 replaces the earlier Act which had become unwieldy because of accumulated amendments. Changes were required also because of new conditions such as travel by air.”⁹³ The most informative explanation came from a most unlikely source – Conservative MP Donald Fleming. Ordinarily a caustic critic of the government, Fleming elaborated on Harris’ brief rationale:

As the minister has indicated, there has been no effective revision of the Immigration Act for forty-two years, and any department of the government and any statute of parliament which have been in effect that length of time and have been submitted to the stresses that the Immigration Act and the department have been under in recent years are due for review by the house. I am sure the house will welcome the opportunity of reviewing the Immigration Act.⁹⁴

Fleming’s remarks presaged a remarkably non-combative debate over the new Act while offering the only evident rationale for the whole exercise: Quite simply, it was time for Canada’s immigration statute to be updated.

⁸⁸ The new section 69, for example, simply incorporated the assisted passage program (previously implemented by order-in-council) into the legislation.

⁸⁹ “Tighter Curbs Proposed In Immigration Rules” *Montreal Star*, June 3, 1952, 21. See also: “Bribe To Cost Immigration Officers Five Years, \$5000” *Toronto Daily Star*, June 4, 1952, 15.

⁹⁰ *The Canada Gazette, Pt. I*, v. 87, 1793.

⁹¹ The 1952-3 edition did include *The Immigration Act* in its list of new legislation for the year. Somehow, this reference managed to be simultaneously brief and exaggerated: “*The Immigration Act* revises completely the legislation regarding the entry of immigrants into Canada. Previous legislation is repealed.” *Canada Year Book*, 1952-53, 1232.

⁹² *Canada Year Book*, 1955, 166.

⁹³ *Canada Year Book*, 1957-1958, 170.

⁹⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952: III, 3077.

With the legislative initiative completed, the government sought to resume the low-key approach that characterized its management of postwar immigration policy. Walter Harris continued as minister, having proven a capable administrator who could skilfully handle (and defuse) parliamentary criticism. With an eye on his political future, Harris also moved to consolidate his influence in Cabinet and the independence of his department in immigration matters. As we have seen, other departments, particularly External Affairs and Labour, had exercised considerable influence on postwar immigration policy. Now, however, Harris decided that the time had come for matters of departmental jurisdiction to be clarified. A “personal” letter to labour minister Milton Gregg began the process. Gregg had been in Cabinet since 1947, but Harris’ instructions to his senior colleague were clear and direct. Recent discussions over immigration estimates had demonstrated unnecessary “overlapping between the Department of Labour and this Department,” Harris admonished. This was causing confusion not only for immigrants but “for the public, religious organizations and other groups.”⁹⁵ He continued, documenting multiple inefficiencies created by Labour’s ongoing involvement in immigration matters. He reminded Gregg that the placement and establishment of immigrants historically fell under the purview of the immigration department. Only after World War II, “on the occasion of special group movements,” had Labour assumed a more direct role in this area. Other departments, Harris explained, had representatives abroad involved in immigration work, but it was clearly understood that they were “under the jurisdiction of the head of the Immigration post abroad.”⁹⁶ The status of Department of Labour officials involved in immigration matters must likewise be clarified.

Harris concluded with a list of specific jurisdictional clarifications to which he was seeking agreement, also making it clear that further negotiation was not contemplated. First, it must be acknowledged that the “placement and establishment” of immigrants was the responsibility of the Immigration Branch, “except in case of certain group movements where both Departments would agree that they be the responsibility of the Department of Labour and the National Employment Service [NES].” Secondly, Labour officials were to discontinue their practice of sending applications and orders for immigrants to their own representatives abroad, and instead forward them to the Immigration Branch. In short, Labour and NES officials outside Canada must henceforth “be placed under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Immigration official in charge of the post for all immigration matters.” Even the number of Labour representatives abroad would be subject to the approval of Harris’ department. Lastly,

⁹⁵ LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG26L, Vol. 96, File D-55, “*Department of Citizenship and Immigration – Personal and Confidential 1950; 1952-53*,” Harris to Gregg, Apr. 22, 1953, 1.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

Citizenship and Immigration representatives were to be “recognized as the sole liaison officers on immigration matters with local governments, organizations, and individuals abroad.”⁹⁷

These instructions to the Labour minister seem particularly churlish in light of the important – and supportive – role of the Department of Labour in postwar immigration policy.⁹⁸ Tension between the two departments appears to have been longstanding, as the innate caution of the Immigration Branch ran counter to Labour’s desire to meet labour-market requirements with immigrant workers.⁹⁹ It seems clear, however, that after Milton Gregg became labour minister he had been diplomatic – even deferential – in his statements concerning his department’s relationship with Citizenship and Immigration.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore unlikely that he appreciated these direct instructions from his cabinet colleague. Harris forwarded a copy of his letter to the prime minister, and although the Immigration department records contain no response from Gregg (nor any comment from St. Laurent), it is evident that the labour minister fell into line. In 1954, prior to his appointment as finance minister, Harris corresponded with Gregg again. The government of Barbados, Harris advised, was seeking to place “seasonal workers” in Canada, and “the meeting of seasonal labour demand ... comes under your jurisdiction.” He continued, making clear to Gregg what the Canadian response would be:

From an immigration standpoint ... we are not at all anxious to have movements of this kind where temporary entry is sought for employment purposes, thereby reducing the possibilities of establishment of bona fide immigrants. ... I am sure you will appreciate the difficulties and misunderstandings which can develop when attempts are made to have persons such as these honour the conditions of their entry by returning home upon the expiry of their temporary stay when they have decided that they wish to remain here.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁸ See above, page 79, and Chapter 3, pages 54; 63-4; and 65-6.

⁹⁹ In February 1947, several months before King’s May 1 statement, deputy labour minister Arthur McNamara proposed a “new approach” to immigration policy that would involve “a very close working relationship” between the departments of labour and immigration. The Immigration Branch, he acknowledged, was primarily responsible for immigrant “selection,” but Labour, through the National Employment Service, could assist by securing contracts for immigrant employment and monitoring placements after their arrival in Canada. Joliffe reacted immediately and negatively to the proposal, which became the opening salvo in a prolonged interdepartmental battle. See LAC MG 26L L.S. St. Laurent Papers, Vol. 225 file I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954*, McNamara to Joliffe, February 25, 1947, and “Memorandum Re. Immigration,” February 28, 1947.

¹⁰⁰ During the debate on estimates for his department in 1951, Gregg explained Labour’s “role” in the immigration process: “We act in association with, and under the policy set out by, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, providing our facilities within the department, in the unemployment insurance commission and in the national employment services, to assist in placing immigrants who come in without any specified place to work.” Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1951: III, 2719.

¹⁰¹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 47, file 1 “*British West Indies 1954-1957*.” Harris to Gregg, July 13, 1954.

Gregg obligingly rejected the Barbadian request.¹⁰²

The immigration minister's influence and independence were obviously growing. Still, there were occasional embarrassments like the 1952 visa scandal, and other disquieting issues had also begun to appear. In 1951, Harris reported to Cabinet that representatives of Canada's small "negro" community were becoming increasingly vocal "about discrimination against negroes from the West Indies."¹⁰³ He reminded his colleagues that Black citizens of Commonwealth Caribbean countries remained inadmissible under a 1949 order in council. (Some exceptions were made by way of "special arrangement" for those coming to study, but such cases had never exceeded 150 per year.) Perhaps, Harris suggested, "some new provision" might be in order, similar to recent rule changes which admitted the close relatives of "Asiatic" residents of Canada. The quota could be small – "possibly about 50 per year." But even this nominal proposal raised alarms, and two of the government's most powerful ministers discouraged it.¹⁰⁴ For the time being, there would be no change to the rules regarding immigration from the British West Indies.

Procrastination, however, was no solution and the Liberals would soon have reason to regret their decision to avoid this issue. As Blair Fraser recounted in *Maclean's*, correspondence in early 1952 from the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (a union whose membership was predominantly Black) attacked the racism in the government's policy toward Black immigration.¹⁰⁵ The problem was compounded when a letter from Walter Harris to the "Toronto Negro Citizens' Committee" came to light, "stating that it was impossible for Negroes, owing to climatic conditions, to adapt themselves to Canadian life." Efforts to explain this communications disaster only made things worse. A "red-faced" immigration official announced that bureaucrats had drafted the letter for the minister's signature. Harris signed it, but had "suggested that it be held up" while the department reviewed its policy: "Somehow the letter got in the mail. Harris hurriedly issued a statement, denying that there was any prohibition against Negroes becoming citizens."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid., Gregg to Harris, July 21, 1954. (J.W. Pickersgill confirmed the policy to the Barbadian Governor upon succeeding Harris as immigration minister: Ibid., Pickersgill to Sir Robert Duncan Harris Arundel, Dec. 16, 1954.)

¹⁰³ *Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 11576, "Immigration from British West Indies"* Dec. 20, 1951, LAC, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2649, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 5-6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 6. External Affairs minister Lester Pearson pointed out the proposal's inherent dilemma: any "quota" imposed on Black immigration might be criticised if made public, whereas keeping it secret would also ensure that no favourable publicity could be generated. Minister of Trade and Commerce C.D. Howe recommended maintaining the status quo "as long as possible." Individual cases deserving of attention could always be dealt with "by means of special arrangements." Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁵ Fraser, "Will Walter Harris be our next Prime Minister?" 9. (The union's letter attacked immigration policy toward Blacks as "illogical, unsound, undemocratic and un-Christian.")

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

This explanation, of course, was entirely disingenuous. As a minister of the Crown, Harris was responsible for any correspondence bearing his signature. Moreover, the fact that skin colour presented no legal impediment to citizenship offered no benefit to people who were denied admission to Canada in the first place. This fumbled response to complaints that were undeniably factual was a low moment of Harris' tenure in Immigration, and the episode was an ominous portent of further problems during the St. Laurent government's final mandate.

As Blair Fraser reported, Harris' overall performance in the immigration portfolio had been widely acclaimed. Other MPs admired his competence and enthusiasm, and appreciated his willingness to help with requests concerning "borderline cases" among their constituents. In general, Fraser concluded, the record was an impressive one: "More than 600,000 of Canada's million postwar immigrants have come during Harris' regime; his second year of office saw the largest total since 1907, just under 195,000."¹⁰⁷ Walter Harris demurred when Fraser inquired about his future ambitions, but he was now seen a potential Liberal leader and prime minister.

Early in 1952, University of Toronto law professor W.G. Friedmann succinctly appraised the country's longstanding attitude to immigration. "In Canada," Friedmann wrote, "both the government and the people have so far preferred to let this immigration business develop with the least possible fuss and publicity."¹⁰⁸ After 1953, new domestic problems and international pressures, similar to those encountered after 1945, would again disturb the even tenor with which the government strove to administer its immigration policy.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Friedmann, "Our Growing Immigration is Everyone's Business," 12.

Chapter Five

The St. Laurent Years, 1953-1955:

A New Minister and a Program under Attack

By the outset of the St. Laurent government's final mandate, two discernable objectives animated its immigration policies. The first – now well entrenched – was the desire to avoid scrutiny as it administered the program and pursued yearly immigration 'targets.' This was the approach that W.G. Friedmann perceptively described in 1952 as the deliberate avoidance of "fuss and publicity." The second objective had coalesced more recently and was only now coming into focus. As it established those annual targets and otherwise refined administrative policy, the government increasingly sought to portray immigration policy as a matter of economics, rather than as a social or political issue.

The strategy for avoiding publicity and minimizing criticism was disingenuous at times. Emboldened by the smooth passage of the department's estimates in 1951 and 1952, the government repeated the practice of withholding debate on estimates for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration until the end of the 1953 and 1954 sessions. This obvious tactic annoyed the opposition, but generally achieved its aim. Conservative MP J.M. Macdonnell attributed the practice to Mackenzie King, who was well known to rely upon Ottawa's early summer heat to "drive the opposition away" and ensure that the government "would get away without much debate" over controversial topics.¹ Davie Fulton also criticized this "last minute" approach, attributing the government's desire to avoid meaningful debate to the effectiveness of opposition criticism of immigration policy in earlier years. This claim was overblown; but Fulton also announced that he had "looked up the record" of all parliamentary debate on immigration since 1950, calculating that the total had not exceeded "three days and one hour."²

Walter Harris dismissed these complaints as little more than "quibbling over detail,"³ and suggested that nothing had prevented members from debating immigration policy if they were genuinely concerned about it. They were not, however, and therein lay the explanation for the success of this 'low-profile' approach and the motivation behind it. Harris recognized that the opposition had no substantive quarrel with the basic tenets of the Liberal government's immigration policy. He also knew what they wanted to hear and he chose his words carefully. Presenting his department's estimates in April 1953,

¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1953-54: VI, 6823.

² *Ibid.*, 6787-8.

³ *Ibid.*, 6824.

Harris reviewed the previous year's immigration figures with a particular emphasis, noting that of the 164,498 "new arrivals" in 1952, more than 64,000 were British: "This represents an increase of 36 per cent in the proportion of British immigrants over the previous year, and in actual numbers an increase of more than 11,000 over 1951." Harris also reported a twenty per cent increase in immigration from the US between 1951 and 1952.⁴

These reassurances undoubtedly made MPs more receptive – or at least less suspicious – toward the remarks that followed. The government, Harris acknowledged, was "fully aware" that Canada still needed more people. The nation's current population (14.5 million) and current intake levels would not be enough to "fulfil our destiny and develop our resources." Nor would natural increase suffice. "Accordingly, the government will continue its program of immigration to stimulate Canadian growth and Canadian development." With this subtle shift to economic language, references to where immigrants might come from grew noticeably less precise. Harris concluded, somewhat vaguely: "[W]e are now selecting immigrants on a very wide basis." He did not elaborate further on this point (although he noted modest recent increases in the number of immigrants "representing the Latin races" – French, Italians, and Belgians). Instead, his closing remarks affirmed the connection between immigration and economic policy:

The approach will continue to be a realistic one, with the development of our economy the guiding factor. We shall anticipate future developments as closely as we can and gear our immigration program to them.⁵

This was precisely the approach the government would pursue, and in articulating it, Harris had also accurately gauged opposition sensibilities. Tory MPs might complain about the timing or the extent of immigration debate, but they offered little criticism of the substance of immigration policy. The contributions of Conservative MP Davie Fulton to the 1954 debate were typical. Fulton had meticulously tallied the time allotted to debate since 1950, but his only substantive policy concern was with the number of Italians – particularly those from "southern Italy" – currently being admitted to Canada. Such people, Fulton generalized, were accustomed to rural village life, and did not "fit in" on Canadian farms. In his view, northern Italians were to be preferred for their "background of industrial and technical training."⁶ The CCF, by contrast, had begun to advocate for an economic focus to immigration policy some time previously, as had various labour organizations.⁷ It is entirely possible, therefore, that the impetus to shift

⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1952-53: IV, 4326-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4328.

⁶ Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 1953-54: VI, 6789.

⁷ See, for example "Labour's Views on Immigration, Submitted by the Canadian Congress of Labour to the Senate Committee on Immigration," July 25, 1946 and "Comment on Immigration," Vol. 2, No. 9, (CCF Publication)

from the vague postwar language of ‘absorptive capacity’ to more economic terminology came from the left side of the political spectrum. Generally, however, the opposition’s preferences concerning ‘suitable’ immigrants remained obvious and unchanged, and it is unlikely that government confidence was greatly disturbed by their advice or criticism. Harris understood his opponents, and he knew how to reassure them.

As he concluded the 1953 debate on his department’s estimates, Harris also acknowledged opposition advice “that we should not have too many immigrants entering the labour force during [the winter] months.” The government had re-implemented that very approach the previous year (having briefly diverged from it in 1950-1) with positive results and “no surplus number of workers in any given community.” Harris was satisfied that immigration policy was now being managed “to fit conditions as we see them, according to the information we receive.” He candidly summarized the strategy:

We never go beyond twelve months; and for that reason one may say that we do not plan for the distant future.We merely say that from month to month and, at the most, up to a year in advance, we have certain expectations of what can be done by way of migration.⁸

With this transition to an economic policy focus, administration of the immigration program began to resemble a financial exercise, similar in appearance to the government’s overall budgetary process. The preparation of a federal budget began each year in the fall with the preparation of estimates by all departments of government, and with the forecasting of the government’s expenditures and revenues, and other economic trends.⁹ With the immigration program, the challenge was to estimate annual employment levels and labour-market requirements, and to match immigration targets to those projections. A detailed report by the minister to cabinet in February 1952 demonstrated how this ‘estimate’ process for immigration would work:

The Departments of Labour and Trade and Commerce had been consulted with regard to prospects for 1952. In August 1951, the Department of Labour had placed requirements for 1952 at 100,000 workers. On February 11th [1952] this figure had been reduced to 57,000 workers made up as follows: farm workers, 18,000; general labourers, including woods workers, miners, track workers, construction labourers, etc., 18,000; clerical and professional, 3,500; domestics, nurses’ aides, etc., 6,000; skilled and semi-skilled, 12,000. To this should be added 6,000 artisans or small businessmen, 60,000 as the normal number of dependents and a figure of about 7,000 to cover dependents in Europe of persons already here, also 7,000 Americans and about 2,500

September 1952: LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration MG28 I-103, vol. 121 “Canada. Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Part II 1952, 121–2.”

⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1953-54: IV, 4383.

⁹ W.E. Harris Interview, July 17, 1980.

Chinese. There might be about another 5,000 to cover special groups of dependents in Europe. This made a total for 1952 of about 145,000.¹⁰

While these figures reflected the best current information, Harris also cautioned his colleagues that “some signs” were pointing toward a period of “lower employment.” A reduction of these target numbers, if required, could be achieved in various ways: rejecting employer “orders” for immigrant workers, refusing visas to certain “classes or occupations,” discontinuing the assisted passage loan scheme, or restricting immigration from Italy (in view of recent “difficulties” with that country). The cabinet accepted the minister’s recommendation of a target number of “about 145,000 persons” for 1952. The assisted passage program would be maintained, but immigrant workers would be discouraged from coming after the beginning of October. Most importantly, “the program [could] be reconsidered in June 1952 if conditions changed materially.”¹¹

The reconsideration took place on June 17, 1952, precisely as anticipated, when Harris reported that conditions had indeed changed. Some 62,000 immigrants had arrived during the first quarter of 1952, a trend which would see the year’s target exceeded if it continued. Accordingly, several adjustments had been made in order to reduce the intake. The general guidelines set out in Order in Council P.C. 2856 of 1950 still applied, favouring British, French, and US applicants and (to a slightly lesser extent) others from northern Europe, and restricting immigration from other countries to agriculturalists with capital and other specified occupational groups. Within those parameters, however, the department’s overseas offices had been instructed that “immigrants requiring assistance in finding employment after arrival must be qualified in specific occupations.” In addition, “special instructions were issued to the Rome office to confine processing to certain close relatives, although special movements of workers previously authorized were completed.” A final modification addressed a different concern: “As there had been a reduction in the number of U.K. and French nationals applying for visas, it was considered advisable to extend the assisted passage loan scheme to British subjects and French citizens with special qualifications.” For the most part, however, the changes would reduce intake for the balance of the year. Any applicants not meeting the reduced parameters would simply be informed that their application “would be held in abeyance.”¹²

¹⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 11744, February 26, 1952, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2649, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 2. Also: LAC RG2 Privy Council Office, Vol. 212, File C-20-5, “Minister’s Memorandum to the Cabinet,” February 21, 1952.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹² Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 12107, June 17, 1952, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2680, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 5-6.

The administrative options available to adjust intake, even slightly, were almost limitless, and the flexibility which characterized immigration policy would continue for the remainder of the government's mandate. And, like the parliamentary opposition, the media found little fault with the system. "We're all for immigration," the *Financial Post* editorialized when the mid-1952 restrictions were imposed, "but we find it hard to quarrel with a temporary period of digestion."¹³

Once the minister's policy recommendations received cabinet approval, the process of implementation could begin. Extensive and ongoing consultations with other departments and with employer organizations resulted in the creation of lists of "occupational selection criteria" for each year. These lists were detailed and lengthy, with columns identifying with an "x" the occupations required and the districts within Canada "in which opportunities were reported to be available." Occupations were identified with great precision; opportunities for engineers (civil, electrical, mechanical), "geophysicists," surveyors, mechanical technicians, nurses, and teachers were all meticulously enumerated, along with the more traditional immigrant categories such as farmers, farm workers, general labourers, and cabinet makers. These lists were then distributed to overseas offices of the Immigration Branch, who were expected to follow them carefully when selecting immigrants. The lists were also modified for each country in which immigrant recruitment was being conducted. Thus, for example, the 1954 list for Italy was comprised almost entirely of labour occupations such as carpenters, cabinet makers, upholsterers, plasterers, tile setters, painters, and masons.¹⁴ In this way, preference could still be given to applicants from certain countries even if racial criteria were becoming slightly less prominent in the selection process. (The practice of preparing separate occupational selection lists for each country was discontinued in 1956.¹⁵)

The primary source of occupational selection data was of course the domestic employer community. Requests from businesses for immigrants with specific skills were investigated as they were received, or referred to other departments for their input. For example, a Nova Scotia timber producer's 1954 application sought approval for "300 experienced pulpwood cutters ... preferably from Scandinavian countries." The application made its way up through the bureaucracy and was forwarded to the Immigration Branch director for approval, having first been referred to the Department of Labour for their recommendation. (In this instance, Labour opposed the request, suggesting that there were enough

¹³ "But We Still Need More People," *Financial Post*, July 12, 1952, 1. See also "Here's Why Ottawa Put on Immigration Brakes," *Ibid.*, 1-3.

¹⁴ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG 32, Vol. 45, File 2, I-2-428 P, "*Immigration Programme. Occupational Selection Lists. 1954.*"

¹⁵ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG 32, Vol. 45, File 4, I-2-428 P, "*Immigration Programme, 1956.*" "Memorandum For The Minister," October 7, 1955.

unemployed workers in the Maritime region to fulfil this and any future requirements. Citizenship and Immigration nevertheless supported the application.)¹⁶ All such requests, no matter how small, appear to have received consideration and were factored in to the yearly estimate process. One 1955 memorandum documented a request from the Melfort Nursing Home in Saskatchewan for precisely five “English-speaking professional nurses.”¹⁷ This meticulous process would continue to the end of the St Laurent period. Departmental memoranda in late 1956, for example, documented Immigration Branch consultations concerning requests to accept immigrants to fill such diverse occupational categories as trained “ship/marine inspectors” and “Greek domestics.”¹⁸

Walter Harris’ 1953 statement that the government was now recruiting immigrants on a “very wide basis” was vague and uninformative, and the evidence to support it is mixed at best. At a June, 1952 cabinet meeting, some restrictions had been reviewed and (in certain cases) even tightened, although Harris did make modest recommendations in respect of two long-excluded immigrant groups. Old prejudices endured, of course, as he reminded his colleagues that certain groups were still considered “less adaptable to Canadian life.” These included “Asians”, whose admission remained restricted under the 1930 Order in Council P.C. 2115 to the spouses and minor children of Canadian citizens, and persons of African descent covered by P.C 2856 of 1950. A relaxation of the rules respecting Chinese immigrants had been implemented in 1951, to allow applications from children up to 25 years of age. The experiment proved unsuccessful, however, when cases of “substitute children” were discovered along with instances where “older children had been trained in subversive activities,” and Harris now recommended a return to the earlier restriction permitting only children under age twenty-one for the Chinese. For other “Asian” groups, however, there would be some modification, as Harris recommended that Syrians, Armenians, Assyrians and Lebanese – heretofore all classified as Asian under P.C.2115 – be removed from its provisions. Similarly for Black immigrants, still restricted to a few categories of close relatives, Harris suggested that in light of “representations received” the rules might be extended “somewhat.”¹⁹ Details of

¹⁶ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG 32 B34, Vol. 16, File E-1-1 “*Estimates General 1954-1955.*” Memorandum re: Mariana Timber Limited – Nova Scotia – Request for Woods Workers” (undated).

¹⁷ LAC Immigration Branch Records RG 76 Vol. 940, “*Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1955, Binder 24 part 1,*” Memo: “Specific Request of Nurses, Professional,” October 24, 1955.

¹⁸ LAC Immigration Branch Records RG 76 Vol. 940, “*Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1955, Binder 24 part 2,*” “Ship Inspectors Grade 2 – Department of Transport,” (October 10, 1956) and “Greek Domestics selected by the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration,” (September 20, 1956).

¹⁹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 12107, June 17, 1952, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2680, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 6-7.

this proposed ‘extension’ remained unspecified, and the increase in Black immigration over the ensuing years was miniscule.²⁰

Cabinet nevertheless approved the minister’s other recommendations, leaving the department to work out the details.²¹ Elsewhere there were further indications of the relaxation of restrictive rules. A March 1953 memorandum advised overseas staff that following “a re-assessment of the 1953 program it has been decided to stimulate the flow of immigration by allowing the posts abroad greater latitude in respect of the number of immigrant workers to be selected.”²² Program officers received precise direction as to how this “greater latitude” would be exercised:

2. You will now select, until further notice, all unsponsored immigrants –
 - (a) who are suitable and desirable,
 - (b) who have a trade, skill or occupation shown on the approved list ... appended hereto,
 - (c) who are nationals of the country in which you are located, refugees, or non-nationals who comply with the Residence rule.
3. Unsponsored immigrants must be willing and able to accept employment in an occupation other than that in which they are qualified.
4. ... unsponsored immigrants who have trades, skills, or occupations for which early arrival dates have been specified, must be accorded priority over unsponsored immigrants in other occupations.²³

District offices within Canada were also involved in the process of determining the number of immigrants that could be absorbed each year. An August 1953 memorandum to “All District Superintendents” suggested the emphasis now being placed on meeting the country’s full “absorptive capacity”:

Taking into account all perceptible trends and potential developments will you ... please let me have not later than September 15 as accurate an estimate as you can make, by authorizing port areas, of the number of immigrant workers whom you expect to be able to place in employment on arrival during 1954.²⁴

Immigration statistics for the period of Harris’ tenure as immigration minister showed the results of the ‘wider’ selection process. During the years 1951 through 1954, immigrants from Britain continued

²⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG32 B34 Vol. 44, File 24: I-2-428E “Comments on Immigration Policy 1956-1957.” By 1956 Pickersgill was describing admissions from the British West Indies as “considerably greater” than they had been in the late 1940s. This was true; intake rose from 352 in 1947 to 896 in 1953 and 849 in 1954. Still, in actual numbers the increase was insignificant, and only a quarter of the 1954 number were Black: *Ibid.*, Pickersgill to Miss Jean Campbell, June 14, 1956.

²¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 12107, June 17, 1952, LAC Privy Council Office, RG 2 Series A-5-a, Vol 2680, Microfilm Reel No. T-2368, 9.

²² LAC Immigration Branch Records RG76 Vol. 939, *Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A-1952*, “SUBJECT: 1953 Program – Selection and Direction of Immigrants”, March 26, 1953.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, “SUBJECT: Immigration Programme – 1954”, August 21, 1953.

to comprise the largest group by far, averaging more than 41,500 each year. The only two countries to show sustained increase during the same period were Germany and Italy, which averaged approximately 29,000 and 23,000 per year respectively. In 1953-4, immigration rates from the British Isles and from the Netherlands (another preferred source) began to drop, which undoubtedly explains the broadened selection criteria implemented during this period and applied to other countries. Immigration among the traditionally least-preferred groups, however, did not increase at all during these years.²⁵

Walter Harris continued as minister of citizenship and immigration until June 1954. His career then resumed its upward trajectory with his appointment as minister of finance following several high-profile resignations from cabinet. As Blair Fraser admiringly noted, Harris left the immigration portfolio having “brought real enthusiasm to his task” and having overseen the intake of more than 600,000 postwar immigrants.²⁶ The new department had been competently launched and administered with, as we have seen, few embarrassing problems, and the alarming decline in immigration during 1949-50 had been reversed.

Harris’ successor as immigration minister was, in some respects, a curious choice. J.W. (Jack) Pickersgill had entered the House of Commons in 1953 as an MP from Newfoundland after many years as principal secretary to Prime Ministers King and St. Laurent. (A brief tenure as secretary to the cabinet had proven a less comfortable experience for Pickersgill, who was accustomed to a more partisan ‘advisory’ role.) His appointment to cabinet as secretary of state in 1953 placed him in a portfolio whose administrative duties were “relatively light,” leaving time to continue his advisory role to the prime minister and to serve as Newfoundland’s representative in cabinet. The Ontario-born, Manitoba-reared “Sailor Jack” quickly became a favourite target among opposition members.

Pickersgill brought to the immigration portfolio a prodigious capacity for hard work (which he was going to need) but also a tendency toward sarcastic humour in his public comments which would occasionally prove problematic. From his co-authorship of Mackenzie King’s famous 1947 policy statement and his role in creating the new immigration department in 1950, Pickersgill was certainly familiar with immigration policy since the war. Throughout his time as head of the prime minister’s office, immigration was just one policy area that fell within his purview; all ministers knew that any issue

²⁵ *Canada Year Book*, 1956, 179-85. Immigration from Britain declined from 46,574 in 1953 to 43,120 in 1954. Immigration from The Netherlands dropped from 20,341 to 16,182 over the same period. Canada admitted 5,600 Jewish immigrants in 1952 but only 2,000 in 1954. Immigration from China dropped from some 2,300 in 1952 to 1,930 in 1954. In 1954, 254 “Negro” immigrants were admitted. *Ibid.*, “7. Origins of Immigrant Arrivals 1952-54”.

²⁶ Fraser, “Will Walter Harris be our next Prime Minister?” 58.

they wanted brought to St. Laurent's attention must start at Pickersgill's desk.²⁷ Hugh Keenleyside's sardonic recollection that Mackenzie King and Pickersgill had "run the country undisturbed"²⁸ from the prime minister's office during the 1940s was probably equally true during St. Laurent's first mandate.

Still, Pickersgill may not have initially anticipated the administrative workload which his new role would entail. "I am very happy with whatever I can do in government," he told one reporter after his appointment, "where my main aim is to do the best I can for Newfoundland."²⁹ As the *Financial Post* observed: "There is no question now of sparing Pickersgill routine departmental duties." His new portfolio, moreover, was known to require "the most delicate political handling" and could be a "pitfall for an unwary government." Fortunately, the *Financial Post* concluded, "Pickersgill has never been accused of being unwary."³⁰ Nor was he particularly self-aware. Even years later in his memoirs, Pickersgill's account of incidents compounded by his admittedly "flippant" remarks demonstrated only limited introspection.³¹

The new minister was firmly committed to principles that had animated postwar immigration policy – careful selection, flexibility, and meeting both labour market requirements and the country's 'absorptive capacity'. Addressing delegates to a Newfoundland labour convention after his appointment, Pickersgill affirmed that he intended "no change in Canada's immigration policy while he was minister of citizenship and immigration." The basic premise was unchanged, although Pickersgill introduced a note of defiance to it. "I do not think it will strengthen this country to bring people who can't absorb quickly into remunerative employment. Immigration properly conducted can add to the productive resources of the country."³² Overall the approach sounded entirely familiar.

Although he planned no major changes, Pickersgill embraced his role with enthusiasm. Periodic consultations with railway companies and other organizations had long been part of the immigration policy process. Traditionally, such consultations had been conducted quietly and on a limited basis, with

²⁷ See for example "Memorandum to Mr. J.W. Pickersgill" (September 17, 1951) LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L Vol. 225 File I-17, *Immigration 1937-1954*. Seeking to brief the prime minister for an upcoming meeting, Harris wrote: "Attached is an aide-memoire on the subject of Italian immigration. It is expected that the Prime Minister of Italy will be bringing this subject up ... with the Prime Minister. It is a truthful but rather uninspiring statement of fact."

²⁸ Keenleyside, *On the Bridge of Time*, Volume 2, 287.

²⁹ LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, Vol. 382, "St. Laurent, Rt. Hon. L. – 1 July 1954-31 Dec. 1954 Pickersgill, Hon. J.W. – Citizenship and Immigration Dept. 2253". This quote is from an article in the file clipped from the St. John's News, dated July 6, 1954. No page number is given.

³⁰ "Pickersgill: He Has Arrived," *Financial Post*, July 10, 1954, 7.

³¹ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 423-31.

³² "Immigration is Significant to Labor," St. John's *Telegraph*, July 23, 1954, LAC L.S. St. Laurent Papers, MG 26L, Vol. 382, "St. Laurent, Rt. Hon. L. – 1 July 1954-31 Dec. 1954 Pickersgill, Hon. J.W. – Citizenship and Immigration Dept. 2253".

businesses and employer representatives and the government's transportation partners receiving most of the attention. Generally, the ritual accomplished little.³³ In October 1954, however, Pickersgill convened a much larger consultation session in a meeting room of the Senate chambers. Four federal departments were represented, along with officials from the railways, major labour organizations, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, Canadian Construction Association, Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. From the Department of Citizenship and Immigration alone, no fewer than eleven Immigration Branch representatives accompanied Pickersgill and deputy minister Laval Fortier. The gathering was unprecedented in both scope and scale, and an important consultation initiative by the government.

A cautious Fortier sought to prepare the minister for the atmosphere he might encounter, particularly from parties not accustomed to being consulted. Regular meetings with business groups had been commonplace, Fortier noted, but not with unions; therefore, "I do not feel that any mention needs to be made of this fact." Instead, the minister should emphasize that this was the first time all groups had been invited at one time to present their views. Particular criticisms might also be anticipated and addressed at the outset:

As you are aware, the press and certain national organizations sometimes contend that we have no planned immigration policy. Such a statement has been made recently at the Convention of the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress. I wonder if in your remarks you should not be provocative and mention that the Department will appreciate knowing what is understood by [those organizations] by "planned immigration" and what suggestions they have to make. The purpose of the meeting as planned is to learn as much as possible from organizations outside the Government, what these national organizations think the national economy will be in 1955, so that those who have to plan the programme could utilize the information given by these national organizations as a guide.³⁴

Pickersgill wisely opted not to be "provocative" with his guests. Official minutes of the conference recorded that he welcomed participants by asking them to adopt a "long-range view" of immigration policy rather than worrying about immediate "day-to day" impacts. In particular, attendees were being asked for their expertise – their "best judgment" – as to what Canada's 1955 immigration targets should be. The principal goal was meeting the country's labour requirements "without saturating

³³ One report explained: "We have been inviting annually representatives of the Provinces [and employer organizations] to discuss the immigration program. We have even attempted to get an opinion from our guests as to what might be in the immigration program, but we have not been too successful in our efforts." LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Vol. 45, File 3, I-2-428P, *Immigration Programme 1954-55*, "Memorandum For The Minister," July 6, 1955.

³⁴ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 45, File 3-I-2-428P, *Immigration Programme, 1954-55*, "Memorandum to: The Minister," October 15, 1954.

the labour market, or doing worse than that.”³⁵ Within the minister’s remarks, which generally emphasized economic factors, there appeared one exceptionally candid acknowledgment. Since 1947, Pickersgill noted, it had been “a matter of conscious policy to increase the population of this country by bringing people into it who were not born here but who we think will become good citizens, *the primary purpose being social rather than economic*”³⁶ [emphasis added]. This remark seems to have gone unnoticed at the time, but the reference to immigration as a “social” issue suggested that despite all efforts to frame policy in economic terms, it was the political concerns presented by immigration which remained most important.

Immigration Branch director C.E.S. Smith also offered candid insights to conference attendees. Smith reported greater delays in placing new immigrants into employment in 1954 than in previous years, and noted the mid-year deletions to the occupational selection lists that were made in response to tightening employment conditions. In particular, criteria for agricultural immigrants had been “raised,” resulting in a substantial reduction in that category from 1953 admissions.³⁷ Clearly, the government was taking stakeholders into its confidence by sharing this sensitive information and explaining how policy was administered.

Ultimately the conference appears to have provided little useful advice to the government. Union executives remained generally non-committal, acknowledging the country’s need for “a larger home market” but also arguing that it was “not feasible to bring in immigrants when there are so many unemployed.”³⁸ The Canadian Congress of Labour representative took refuge in ignorance: “He declared that it was completely impossible to evaluate what needs would exist in Canada for the coming year without having comprehensive information with respect to the economic situation.”³⁹ Employer and business representatives offered views generally favourable to immigration, and identified some occupational groups for which workers were needed. Most attendees seemed to appreciate being consulted, and agreed that the meeting had been worthwhile. Even if it achieved little of substance, the session nevertheless represented an important early example of the type of government - ‘stakeholder’ consultation that would become commonplace in later decades.

³⁵ LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 45, File 3-I-2-428P, *Immigration Programme, 1954-55*, “Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Minutes of the meeting on immigration matters between Canadian Government officials and officials of representative private organizations ... on Monday, October 18, 1954”, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

Pickersgill's expanded consultation program continued as he prepared his recommendations for 1955. A November 1954 meeting gathered together representatives of every federal department with an interest in immigration policy. The reliable Fortier summarized the proceedings.⁴⁰ The Department of Trade and Commerce, Fortier recorded, was "very strongly in favour of a high rate of immigration ... on the premise that immigration is in itself, a stimulus to the Canadian economy and an expansionary influence which does not add to unemployment difficulties." The Department of Labour agreed that the economy was improving, but added a note of caution that this trend had not necessarily resulted in increased "manpower" requirements. Other departments – Finance, Public Works, and Defense Production – along with the Bank of Canada, all concurred that the country's confident economic outlook would justify a high target number for immigrants in the year ahead. The real challenge, Fortier predicted, would be in securing enough suitable immigrants, in light of improving economic conditions in Europe, and "the fact that the impression is rather widespread abroad that employment possibilities in Canada are not too good." As a strategy to address the anticipated shortfall, Fortier recommended the re-establishment of Canadian immigration offices in the United States, a practice that had been discontinued in 1930.

The minister's recommendations for 1955 were presented to Cabinet in December 1954. They were ambitious, precise, and more detailed than his predecessor's had generally been. Noting the extensive consultations that he had conducted, Pickersgill reported a "general consensus of opinion that Canada could absorb approximately 150,000 immigrants" during the coming year, "comprising 77,570 workers and 72,430 dependents." Fortier's US proposal did not receive full endorsement, given that "employment opportunities were not now as good in Canada as they might be." However, Cabinet supported a more circumspect approach whereby an immigration official would be posted to the Consulate in New York, to "investigate possibilities ... informally." The overall target of 150,000 for 1955 was also approved.⁴¹

This energetic start to his term as minister might have been cause for confidence, but as Pickersgill later recalled, "I soon discovered that administering Citizenship and Immigration was a major task filled with opportunities to gain bad publicity."⁴² Political problems arose almost immediately, beginning at an unexpected source. The Canadian Bar Association – ordinarily a staid and non-controversial organization – had formed a subcommittee on 'civil liberties' in 1952. One issue on the

⁴⁰ LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 45, File 3-I-2-428P, *Immigration Programme, 1954-55*, "Memorandum To: Hon. J.W.Pickersgill," December 3, 1954.

⁴¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14041, December 16, 1954, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2656, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184, 14-6.

⁴² Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 423.

sub-committee's agenda was the government's administration of the *Immigration Act's* admission provisions. The principal concern was the absolute discretion vested in immigration officers to permit or deny admission to Canada, and to order the deportation of visitors seeking permission to remain. The sub-committee examined some two hundred immigration cases "involving allegations of improper or arbitrary exercise of bureaucratic discretion."⁴³ A preliminary report of its findings was prepared in August 1954. Among its criticisms, the report decried the government's refusal to make public its procedural directives to staff regarding the interpretation of the legislation, and the absence of a procedure for immigrants to seek an impartial review of an officer's decision outside the immigration bureaucracy.

Like its predecessors, the 1953 *Immigration Act* vested absolute discretion in the minister to permit or deny admission, and to delegate those discretionary powers to immigration officers. As we have seen, the 1953 statute had only slightly modified the process for review of an immigration officer's decision.⁴⁴ The changes, however, were designed to make the appeal process faster rather than to enhance protection or improve fairness. For example, the decision of an immigration officer to deny admission was subject to review by another officer who had been designated a 'Special Inquiry Officer.'⁴⁵ The new provisions also allowed for the panel of an appeal board under the Act to be reduced from three members to one, also in the interests of expediency. Lastly, under the Act's circuitous review process, an appeal from the decision of an Immigration Appeal Board went to the minister, whose decision would be final.⁴⁶ Even by 1950s legal standards, the administrative and procedural deficiencies in this process were glaring, and they should have been addressed in the 1953 statute. The CBA's interim report now exposed them in a most embarrassing manner. Although it is clear that the CBA did not intend these "preliminary" findings to be made public, they nevertheless instigated a deluge of bad publicity for the government.

The CBA report elicited a response from Fortier in the form of a lengthy memorandum to his minister, suggesting "comments" that might be used when questioned about the matter. Fortier undoubtedly recognized that his department's long-entrenched practices were under fire, but the only arguments he could muster were weak and unconvincing. The notion of releasing departmental materials appalled him: "I know of no company who would agree that its internal directives should be made public." Equally alarming was the report's recommendation of an arm's-length immigration appeal tribunal, similar to the Income Tax Appeal Board or the Tariff Appeal Board, and presided over by a federal court judge. This, Fortier exclaimed, would lead to further appeals to the federal courts "on

⁴³ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 332.

⁴⁴ See above, Ch. 4, page 89.

⁴⁵ *The Immigration Act*, 1 Elizabeth II. Chapter 42, sections 24-29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, section 31(4).

questions of law,” over which the bureaucracy retained complete jurisdiction under the current system. Moreover, a tribunal system “would not ... be practical as in cases of rejection on security grounds in most cases the evidence could not be made available to the court.”⁴⁷ The reason such “evidence” would be unavailable, of course, was that the *Immigration Act* did not require officers to provide it in their decisions. Fortier’s concern here was that the entire system might have to be overhauled.

Years later in his memoirs, Pickersgill disclosed that the CBA report had been orchestrated by two lawyers who were dissatisfied with Immigration Branch decisions regarding their clients. He recalled how the two attempted to blackmail him, offering to “call off their campaign if I would reverse a number of specific decisions taken when Harris was minister,” and promising “trouble in Parliament” if he did not comply. Pickersgill “indignantly” rejected the demand, but he did not seem to immediately sense the political trouble that was brewing.⁴⁸ When news of the report became public, press reports initially described the minister as “studying”⁴⁹ the CBA findings and, later, as “ignoring” them on the basis that the report was interim only and had not been formally presented to the government.⁵⁰

An unrelated legal matter working its way through the Ontario courts at the same time would compound the government’s difficulties. Shirley Brent, a young woman from Buffalo, New York entered Canada in 1952 and took up residence in Toronto. After securing an annulment of a previous marriage, she married a Canadian citizen in early 1954 and applied under the Act for admission to Canada. An immigration officer rejected the application and ordered her deported. His decision simply informed Brent that she did not meet the requirements of a particular provision in the *Immigration Act* regulations.⁵¹ No evidence was provided to support the decision (which was almost certainly based upon the applicant’s marital history). The regulation in question offered no clarification either, referencing only an applicant’s “unsuitability, having regard to the economic, social ... health or other conditions or requirements existing ... *in Canada*” (emphasis added).⁵² Mysteriously, a news photographer was on hand to document Mrs. Brent’s arrest for deportation, and the sensational photographs appearing in the press provided a distinctly police-state flavour to the episode.⁵³

⁴⁷ LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 16, File E-1-1-A *Estimates Committee 1955-1957, (file no. 18)* “Memorandum For the Minister Re: Report of the sub-committee on Immigration – Canadian Bar Association” (undated).

⁴⁸ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 425.

⁴⁹ “Pickersgill Gets Charge Data,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 4, 1954, 18. Also, “Pickersgill Gives Study to Charges by Bar Committee,” *Montreal Gazette*, September 4, 1954.

⁵⁰ “Pickersgill Ignoring Bar Claims,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 3, 1954, 1.

⁵¹ *Ex parte Brent* [1955] O.R. 480 (Ontario Court of Appeal) 486.

⁵² [1953] S.O.R. 536, section 20(4)(b).

⁵³ For example, see Fred Bodsworth, “What’s behind the Immigration wrangle?” *Maclean’s Magazine*, May 14, 1955, 12-3; 127-30.

Although the *Immigration Act* provided no right of appeal to the courts from a deportation order, Brent's lawyers brought the matter forward by way of an application for injunctive relief, seeking to have the deportation order quashed. When the Ontario Supreme Court upheld the deportation, her counsel appealed further to the Court of Appeal. The case was argued in esoteric legal language, but the real issues before the Court were straightforward. Had the applicant received the hearing to which she was entitled under the Act, and had she received a sufficient explanation of the officer's decision? The Court answered both questions emphatically in the negative. Unless the Act's provisions were applied to ensure that applicants were entitled to know the reasons for an officer's decision and the evidence upon which it was based, "the whole proceedings are reduced to an absolute farce."⁵⁴

The *Brent* case was a resounding indictment of the government's admission procedures. The decision was affirmed in 1956 by the Supreme Court of Canada (which also declared the regulation itself to have exceeded the authority that could be delegated to officers under the *Immigration Act*).⁵⁵ As one contemporary scholar explained in 1957, the Supreme Court had effectively nullified a "crucial" regulatory provision under which "subordinate officials [had been authorized] to decide whom to admit into and whom to exclude from Canada."⁵⁶ The unfettered discretion that had characterized immigration policy for eight decades was no longer tenable. The government would be forced to respond with a revised regulation and amended admission procedure, but the political damage caused by CBA and Supreme Court criticisms would continue to grow.

During the fall of 1954, the issues raised by the bar association and *Brent* erupted in the media. The ordinarily Liberal-friendly *Winnipeg Free Press* led the attack, reacting critically to a series of public statements by the minister which had defended his department with old arguments about absorptive capacity and the need to maintain flexibility and discretion. Such statements, the *Free Press* scolded, were not policy but "high-sounding and meaningless platitudes."⁵⁷ Other analyses dismissed Pickersgill's continuing references to Mackenzie King's 1947 policy statement: "Anyone guided by that clutter of generalities," the *Globe and Mail* declared, "would soon get lost." The *Globe and Mail* speculated insightfully about the minister's deliberately unenthusiastic approach to immigration: "Mr. Pickersgill

⁵⁴ *Ex parte Brent* [1955] O.R. 480 (Ontario Court of Appeal) 488.

⁵⁵ *A.G. of Canada v. Brent*, [1956] S.C.R. 318, at 320.

⁵⁶ Corbett, *Canada's Immigration Policy*, 39.

⁵⁷ "Mr. Pickersgill's Platitudes", *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 4, 1954, 21. See also: "Pickersgill Defends Policy", *ibid.*, 1; "Words Without Deeds", *ibid.*, November 3, 1954, 19; and "Mr. Pickersgill's Philosophy", *ibid.*, November 10, 1954.

does not think, we are sure, that immigration is a bad thing. But he thinks a lot of other people think it is a bad thing, and he is anxious to placate them.”⁵⁸

Newspaper accounts during this period thus demonstrated that it was the lack of an identifiable policy that troubled the press more than the specific issues raised by the bar association and in the courts. Canadians in general might have little interest in legal principles, in immigration, or in immigrants, but a government that would not or could not articulate a clear policy was newsworthy. Equally newsworthy was the minister’s tendency to be blunt. During a November 24 radio interview, Pickersgill offered this candid acknowledgment:

“We have a selective immigration policy and that means we have a discriminatory immigration policy,” Mr. Pickersgill said. “But that is not to say we discriminate against any individual because of his race.”

When questioned during the same interview about his government’s “cautious” attitude toward immigration from Asia and the British West Indies, Pickersgill replied: “We are not going to permit any massive immigration from those areas.”⁵⁹ Such candid (and contradictory) pronouncements could hardly be expected to win new friends or reassure critics.

Inevitably the mounting criticism of the government’s immigration practices moved into the House of Commons as the 1955 session began. The Conservatives’ Davie Fulton led the assault on February 15 as debate opened on departmental estimates. Seizing upon the various issues raised by the bar association and in the press, Fulton declared that the government’s immigration policies were neither clear, consistent, nor coordinated. Neither were they conducted “in accordance with the best interests and needs of Canada.”⁶⁰ His most serious charge, however, concerned the administrative practices of the immigration department. Here Fulton challenged the long-held position of the government (and all previous governments) that entry to Canada was entirely a discretionary matter – a matter of privilege but not of ‘right.’ Fulton misleadingly over-stated this point, arguing that the degree of administrative discretion was so absolute that it provided no legal rights whatsoever, and “cannot be made a matter of law.” The result, Fulton charged, was “administrative chaos amounting ... to ... administrative lawlessness.”⁶¹ In support of his argument, Fulton quoted section 20 (4) of the *Immigration Act* regulation, the same provision under which Shirley Brent had been ordered deported.

⁵⁸ “Mr. Pickersgill on Immigration”, *The Globe and Mail*, November 9, 1954, 6. Also: “There Is No Policy”, *ibid.*, February 21, 1955, 6.

⁵⁹ “Influx From West Indies Banned – Ottawa”, *Toronto Daily Star*, November 25, 1954, 2.

⁶⁰ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1955: 2, 1158-62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1164.

Much has been made of Fulton's attack, which was accompanied by a motion of censure of the government.⁶² Contemporary accounts emphasized Fulton's allegations of administrative abuse.⁶³ He had effectively challenged the long-standing policy premise – set out by Mackenzie King in 1947 – that immigration was entirely a matter of discretion and privilege, rather than a “fundamental human right.”⁶⁴ There simply must be limits to that premise, Fulton protested. For example, Canadian citizens were entitled to apply for the admission of certain relatives. How could the government maintain “that there is no right on the part of the Canadian citizen when he makes an application?”⁶⁵ Surely, he continued, such rights as were created by statute must have some existence beyond arbitrary bureaucratic discretion, and be subject to determination “by some judicial or semi-judicial process.”⁶⁶

It was an effective performance. In the ensuing debate opposition members provided numerous examples of alleged bureaucratic abuse, although only Diefenbaker managed to exceed Fulton's level of indignation over “arbitrary” immigration policies. Raging over the “absolutism,” “tyrannical” practices, and “uncontrolled despotism” of the immigration department, Diefenbaker demanded the appointment of a royal commission to investigate its abuses. The *Immigration Act's* appeal procedure, Diefenbaker thundered, was simply “an appeal to Caesar, to the minister himself. An appeal from the hired man to the hired man's boss.”⁶⁷ In all, the episode made for spectacular political theatre, and the press coverage was duly sensational,⁶⁸ focusing primarily on the allegations of shocking and reprehensible admission practices. (Remarkably, little attention was paid to another of Fulton's charges: that the government had “neglected British immigration” and failed “to put sufficient emphasis on ... this potential source of most desirable immigrants.”⁶⁹)

Pickersgill responded in the House with a vigorous and thorough defense of his department's conduct. Fulton's description of a system that proffered no legal rights whatsoever was, he argued, grossly exaggerated. There was the right to apply for admission, for oneself or others, and the right to seek review of a departmental decision. These were ‘rights,’ even if the process did not provide recourse to the courts. As for the notorious Canadian Bar Association report, Pickersgill read the entire document

⁶² See, for example, Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 108-10; Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 332.

⁶³ John A. Stevenson, “Ottawa Letter: A New Target for the Opposition,” *Saturday Night* March 5, 1955, 12; Fred Bodsworth, “What's behind the Immigration wrangle?” *Macleans Magazine*, May 14, 1955, 12-3; 127-30.

⁶⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2646.

⁶⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1955: 2, 1165.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1255-60.

⁶⁸ “Diefenbaker Charges Uncontrolled Despots Set Immigration Rules” *The Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1955. 1. Also: Harvey Hickey, “Slash Red Tape in Immigration, CCFer Urges”, *ibid.*, February 16, 1955, 17.

⁶⁹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1955: 2, 1163.

into the record, describing its recommendations as “innocuous” and noting that the CBA itself had ordered further study before deciding whether to endorse the ‘preliminary’ findings of its own sub-committee.⁷⁰ There were also, he argued, important issues of privacy and security which justified the practice of not providing applicants with evidence or detailed reasons when admission was being denied.⁷¹

Pickersgill concluded with an affirmation of the principles that had animated immigration policy since Confederation. Parliament, he noted, “has always reserved to the government the right to select the persons who may be admitted to this country as immigrants.” It had established certain principles to ensure the selection of those “who will have to change their ways least in order to adapt themselves to Canadian life and to contribute to the development of the Canadian nation”:

That is why a deliberate preference is shown for immigrants from countries with political and social institutions similar to our own. That is why a deliberate preference is given to the relatives of Canadian citizens and other persons already resident in Canada. And that is why a deliberate preference is given to people possessing qualifications or occupations which give them an opportunity for employment or establishment.⁷²

Walter Harris brought the fractious debate to an end on February 18, reminding the opposition that the current statutory regime had been thoroughly reviewed in 1952 when the new *Immigration Act* was tabled. “Not a single member of the opposition groups advocated in that committee a change to a system of legal decisions as to who would be admitted to Canada.”⁷³

Fulton’s motion of censure was easily defeated. Years later in his memoirs, Pickersgill recalled with satisfaction his detailed defense of his department, theorizing that “a speech that exhausted the audience often exhausted the subject.”⁷⁴ That may have been true within the Commons, but the political damage arising from negative press coverage would continue, especially as non-daily publications turned their attention to the government’s immigration problems. The opposition, as *Saturday Night* observed, now had a new “target” in Jack Pickersgill.⁷⁵ A lengthy *Macleans* article recounted in detail the government’s recent immigration troubles, also describing “polite but mounting suggestions ... from trade and embassy officials, and from foreign governments, that Canada’s immigration policy may be damaging our national reputation abroad.”⁷⁶ At the very least, the administrative and procedural

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1241.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1247-8.

⁷² Ibid., 1254.

⁷³ Ibid., 1298.

⁷⁴ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 426-7.

⁷⁵ John A. Stevenson, “A New Target for the Opposition,” *Saturday Night*, March 5, 1955, 12.

⁷⁶ Fred Bodsworth, “What’s behind the Immigration wrangle?” *Macleans Magazine*, May 14, 1955, 12.

deficiencies which the debate had exposed, and which were soon to be confirmed by the courts in the *Brent* case, would have to be addressed.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect to the immigration controversy in early 1955 was that it had not erupted sooner. To perceptive observers, there were obvious explanations. MPs from all parties were “constantly pressed by their constituents” seeking help with immigration matters. They in turn brought such requests to the minister, knowing that a favourable outcome would often depend on ministerial discretion. Walter Harris, Blair Fraser noted, was the most ‘sat-with’ member in the House of Commons. As minister, he had “made friends” on all sides for his willingness “to interpret the regulations with compassion and a sense of humor.”⁷⁷ In short, Walter Harris as immigration minister had enjoyed widespread cooperation and respect. This enabled him to administer a highly discretionary program even when faced with competing and contradictory interests – labour unions and other groups opposed to immigrants, and individuals and employers demanding more of them.⁷⁸ It is impossible to know whether the bitter 1955 debate would have been avoided if Harris had still been the immigration minister. What is clear is that his successor was less popular, and that when presented with an opportunity to attack the government with sensational allegations and criticisms in early 1955, the opposition did not hesitate.

Pickersgill appeared unperturbed by the controversy surrounding his department and gave no indication that any of its policies would be altered. The government’s official response to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brent* came later, in the form of an “obscure order-in-council.”⁷⁹ P.C. 1956-785 explicitly divided admissible immigrants into four classes, based primarily on country-of-origin (i.e. racial) criteria.⁸⁰ As the Cabinet’s deliberations made clear, the real focus of the new regulation had little to do with the legal and procedural issues cited by the courts:

The main purpose of the revision was to prevent undesirable persons from remaining in Canada if they had once managed to enter and, in the face of the judgment in the *Brent* case, it was impossible to do this under the old regulations.⁸¹

Appeal procedures were also modified, with equal reluctance.⁸²

⁷⁷ Fraser, “Will Walter Harris be our next Prime Minister?” 8-9.

⁷⁸ Hickey, “Slash Red Tape in Immigration, CCFer Urges”, 17.

⁷⁹ Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 333.

⁸⁰ SOR/56-180, *Canada Gazette Part II*, Vol. 90, No. 11, 545. Section 20 of the new regulation (P.C. 1956-785) catalogued, in descending order of preference, the countries from which immigrants could be landed in Canada.

⁸¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15128, May 24, 1956, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

⁸² SOR/56-41, *Canada Gazette Part II*, Vol. 90, No. 3, 83. This regulatory amendment created an Immigration Appeal Board to which appeal could be made by persons who were ordered deported. Approval to establish the IAB was given in Cabinet on December 21, 1955 following a remarkably brief discussion: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14774, December 21, 1955, LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2659, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184.

When a friendly journalist requested a summary of the government's current immigration policy, Pickersgill provided a detailed and typically candid response. As ever, he confirmed, Canada was seeking "suitable and desirable immigrants" in such numbers as could be readily absorbed ... without altering the fundamental character of the population." Occupational criteria were applied to identify "those who will contribute something to the Canadian economy and who will be easily integrated." And racial preferences remained unchanged: "Experience has shown," Pickersgill confirmed, that British, French and American citizens "are the most adaptable to the Canadian way of life."⁸³

The minister thus appeared determined to carry on as before, unaffected by recent criticism. A 1955 departmental review of the handling of applications from Chinese immigrants resulted in changes to the review process which ran contrary to those demanded by Fulton, the CBA, and the courts. Henceforth, Pickersgill decided, there would be no further appeal in cases where the original rejection had already been reviewed at the officer level. Such cases, he reasoned, served only to create "unnecessary delays" for officials who might otherwise be productively engaged dealing with new applicants.⁸⁴ (Chinese immigration, Pickersgill agreed, was a perennial source of difficulty for the government.⁸⁵) Other ethnic groups fared no better in the short term.⁸⁶

Pickersgill seemed equally un-phased by media criticism. He explained to one journalist that giving would-be immigrants reasons for their rejection would amount to "telling a Communist how we found out he is a Communist," or might reveal to subversive organizations the "secret techniques we have for ferreting them out."⁸⁷ It was true, Pickersgill confirmed, that immigration policy was selective. "But I do not understand there is any real difference between the words selection and discrimination."⁸⁸ When the same journalist reported that the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration had criticised Canadian immigration policy, Pickersgill seemed prepared to simply ignore the charge. Only an

⁸³ LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 45, File 22 – I-2-428E *Comments on Policy 1954-1955*, Pickersgill to John LeBlanc, June 9, 1955.

⁸⁴ LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 46, File 6 – I-2-818 *Chinese Immigration Policy 1954-1957*, "Statement for the Estimates – Chinese Immigrants" (undated).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Fortier to Pickersgill, July 27, 1956.

⁸⁶ The Toronto "Negro Citizens' Coalition" travelled to Ottawa in April 1954 with a brief outlining their concerns regarding the *Immigration Act's* treatment of "coloured" citizens from within the Commonwealth. Coalition representatives received a polite hearing from Walter Harris but no commitments and no formal reply until the following November, when Pickersgill confirmed that his department could "offer no encouragement for the broadening of categories of persons admissible to Canada from the British West Indies." LAC J.W.Pickersgill Records, MG32 B34, Vol. 22, *British West Indies 1953-1957*, Pickersgill to Donald W. Moore, November 29, 1954. See also: City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 431 (Donald Willard Moore), Box 607200, File 1, *Delegation to Ottawa: brief and background material*, "Brief Presented to the Prime Minister et al., by NEGRO CITIZENSHIP ASSOCIATION, April 27, 1954."

⁸⁷ Fred Bodsworth, "What's behind the Immigration wrangle?" *Maclean's Magazine*, May 14, 1955, 12

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

apologetic letter from the ICEM's deputy director, assuring Pickersgill that the organization had expressed no such concern, provoked a reaction from the minister. "I was not the least disturbed by the article," Pickersgill jovially replied, "since it contained so many other inaccuracies."⁸⁹

Such bravado was undoubtedly intended to show resolve in the face of opposition criticism. Pickersgill certainly had no intention of letting the opposition or the media dictate the government's immigration policy. Accordingly his public demeanor suggested business as usual. By mid-1955, however, the St. Laurent government began to implement a series of significant changes. And as with previous transformations to immigration policy, both domestic and international pressures would provide the impetus.

⁸⁹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34, Vol. 62, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. 1954-1957 (file no. 48)*, P. Jacobsen, Deputy Director ICEM to Pickersgill, June 3, 1955; Pickersgill to Jacobsen, June 8, 1955.

Chapter Six

The St. Laurent Years, 1955-1957: Change, and Defeat

The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration was formed in 1952, one of numerous international initiatives to address the enormous and ongoing challenge of postwar refugees and displaced persons. Canada was one of fifteen founding member countries.¹ Upon learning of media reports that his organization had criticized Canadian immigration policy, the ICEM's deputy director was mortified. "Please believe in all my regret," he wrote to Pickersgill, adding that the May 1955 *Maclean's* article had attributed opinions to ICEM representatives which "had never been voiced to Mr. Bodsworth [its author] ... nor to anyone else."²

Clearly the ICEM did not want to appear to be meddling in the domestic affairs of one of its volunteer members. As we have seen, Pickersgill readily accepted the apology and seemed prepared to consider the matter closed.³ There is evidence, however, that the ICEM had indeed made pointed observations about Canada's immigration program. In January 1955, the *Financial Post* reported that the ICEM had recently produced "an impressive study of the importance of immigration to Canada" which, while not overtly critical, had identified several economic benefits that would accrue from a "stepped-up" immigration program. First, there would be increased levels of investment created by population growth, which would "counterbalance fluctuations in world trade." Secondly, an expanded domestic market and reduced dependence on international trade "would strengthen the Canadian economy in relation to the U.S., reducing the time lag between rises in standard of living in Canada as against the U.S." In other

¹ Although Canada's contributions to the organization were primarily financial, some 196,000 immigrants and refugees would be settled in Canada under ICEM auspices between 1952 and 1962, when the Diefenbaker government withdrew from the organization: Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 18-20, 429n32.

² LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Vol. 62, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. 1954-1957 (file no. 48)*, Jacobsen to Pickersgill, June 3, 1955.

³ See above, Chapter 5, page 118n89.

words, a sufficient level of immigration could eliminate the problem of emigration from Canada to the United States.⁴

The ICEM had evidently given the matter of Canadian immigration policy considerable thought. They suggested a precise target of 170,000 immigrants for 1955, a substantial increase over the postwar yearly average of 140,000. The ICEM also noted understandingly the annual fluctuations in economic activity and employment levels in Canada that were caused by severe weather, and the demands for shipping during “tourist season” which made immigrant transport difficult: “This results in the failure to achieve optimum performance.” Such challenges, the ICEM concluded, suggested that Canada should be planning its immigration strategy “further in advance.”⁵

It is evident that the ICEM was keenly interested in Canadian policy, and that the Canadian government was paying attention to their views. A draft cabinet memorandum prepared for the minister in May 1955 noted a recent appeal from the ICEM concerning an initiative for “moving refugees from China,” and recommended that the minister seek approval for funds to be made available in support.⁶ The document also noted the continuing refugee crisis confronting the United Nations: “The High Commissioner for Refugees has under his mandate 300,000 refugees in Europe whose problems remain unsolved. Among them are 75,000 who are still living in camps in Austria, Germany, Italy and Greece.” A proposal had been submitted to the UN General Assembly to address the crisis by integrating refugees into their current countries of residence, at a projected cost of \$16 million. The Canadian delegation supported the idea, but emphasized that any contribution “would be influenced by the extent to which other governments were also prepared to make funds available.”⁷

While these organizations raised potential policy concerns, other groups were making more immediate demands closer to home which had to be addressed. First came a request from the government of Jamaica for the admission to Canada of Jamaican women to work as “domestic servants.” Pickersgill took the matter to cabinet on May 5, 1955, no doubt recollecting the government’s difficulties with Canada’s Black community the previous year. His colleagues acknowledged (with little apparent enthusiasm) that the existing restrictions on British West Indies immigration were “somewhat

⁴ “They’ve Got People to Spare And Canada Should Absorb More, Says Migration Council,” *Financial Post*, January 15, 1955, 29. No byline appeared on this article; however, the ICEM identified its author as “Mr. Peter Newman.” [Jacobsen to Pickersgill, footnote 2 above].

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Vol. 62, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. 1954-1957 (file no. 48)*, “Draft Memorandum for Cabinet. Confidential.” May 3, 1955. (There is no evidence that Pickersgill raised the matter in Cabinet.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

anomalous” given the agreements now in place with India, Pakistan, and Ceylon.⁸ Approval was quickly granted for the proposal, “as a gesture of good will and in the interest of Canada’s important trade relations with Jamaica.” It was modified to include 25 domestic workers from Barbados together with 75 from Jamaica, and implemented in late 1955.⁹ So significant was the initiative to Canada’s Black community that a delegation from the Negro Citizenship Association travelled to Montreal to meet the first group of young women as they arrived. It was, as Donald Moore recorded, “the first time that Negro migration of any kind to Canada has been planned.” Moore also recognized the pressure on this group of young immigrants as “ambassadors” for future Caribbean immigration to Canada: “The part they play in the home may bring to Canadian businessmen the knowledge that, in these same parts, secretaries, stenographers, accountants and skilled mechanics may be found.”¹⁰

In subsequent years the domestic worker program was expanded in numbers and to include workers from other Caribbean countries.¹¹ Pickersgill recollected the initiative in his memoirs, with some pride, as the first change he made to immigration policy. Other changes followed, modest in scope but humanitarian in nature. The “automatic exclusion of Armenians and Lebanese as Asians” was formally eliminated. Pickersgill also approved the installation of immigrant processing facilities in Greece, despite the political risk that Greek Communists might be inadvertently admitted to Canada.¹² An April 1955 Cabinet decision facilitated the return of any citizens of Japanese origin who had been repatriated to Japan after the war, thereby forfeiting their status as Canadian nationals and British subjects.¹³ Members of this group – approximately 600 in number – could return if they wished to do so, on humanitarian grounds although they did not otherwise fall within “admissible classes under existing regulations.” Another change applied to immigrants from Yugoslavia and other Soviet satellite states, relaxing rules to permit

⁸ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14344, May 6, 1955 “Immigration; admission of domestics from Jamaica,” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2657, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184.

⁹ Ibid., Also: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14423, June 8, 1955, “Immigration; admission of British West Indians for domestic service.” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2658, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184.

¹⁰ City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 431, File 1, Box 607200, *Delegation to Ottawa: brief and background material*, “Director’s report on the occasion of welcoming to Canada the first 100 Negro immigrant girls from Barbados and Jamaica, Montreal, November 3rd, 1955,” 4.

¹¹ A May 1956 Immigration Branch memorandum announced the extension of the program “to include Trinidad and British Guiana,” and increasing from the number of workers from 100 to 200: LAC Immigration Branch Records RG 76, vols. 940-941, *Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1956 Binder #24, part 2*, “Subject – Domestics from BWI, Barbados, Trinidad and British Guiana”, May 28, 1956. The decision was made in cabinet in March: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14995, March 29, 1956, “Immigration; admission of coloured domestics,” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

¹² Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 428.

¹³ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14301, April 20, 1955, “Japanese Immigration; return of former residents to Canada and special cases.” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2657, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184.

entry to Canada of the parents or children of Canadian citizens of Slavic origin.¹⁴ Revisions to the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme, implemented in December, extended the availability of loans from single immigrants and the “heads” of families to all immigrants found to be “suitable, desirable, and adaptable.”¹⁵ Minutes of the Cabinet’s deliberation on this issue summarized the political dilemma which immigration continued to pose:

On the whole, the majority of the population was against immigration most of the time unless it improved their own personal positions. On the other hand, there was a general feeling that the country should grow faster than it could grow without immigration.¹⁶

Some of these policy revisions may have had minor significance individually. Collectively, however, they reveal a dichotomy between Pickersgill’s public statements and the policy directions he had begun to pursue. It is also evident that some of these policy directions were taken against the advice of his officials. A January 1955 Immigration Branch memorandum from Director C.E.S. Smith was particularly illustrative. Responding to a request from his deputy minister that “some consideration” might be given to immigration agreements with British West Indian countries, similar to those in place with India, Ceylon, and Pakistan, Smith offered a brutally frank summation:

It has long been the policy of this Department to restrict the admission to Canada of coloured or partly coloured persons. This policy has been based on unfavourable experience with respect to Negro settlements such as we have in Halifax, the generally depressed circumstances of the Negro in Canada and an understanding that the Canadian public, apart from certain minority groups, is not willing to accept any significant group of Negro immigrants.¹⁷

Smith continued, disingenuously explaining that Blacks were not *absolutely* excluded under the regulations, and never had been. Those who were British subjects, US citizens, close relatives of Canadian residents, or who presented “cases of exceptional merit” were, at least technically, admissible. It was through careful application of “administrative controls,” Smith explained, that *de facto* exclusion had been maintained. In an effort to appear balanced, Smith concluded with an outline of arguments both

¹⁴ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14466, July 11, 1955, “Immigration policy; immigrants from Yugoslavia, the U.S.S.R. and satellite countries.” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2658, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184. Cabinet noted that representatives of Canada’s Slavic community utilized an effective lobbying strategy in pursuit of this concession, arguing “that Chinese immigrants were admitted to Canada more easily than their own relatives.”

¹⁵ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Box 45, file 4, I – 2-428P *Immigration Program, 1956*, “Press Release,” December 19, 1955.

¹⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 14724, November 30, 1955, “Financial Measures to assist immigration.” LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol 2659, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184. (One year later, the Assisted Passage Program was extensively revised again by the infusion of an additional \$2.25 million in funding for loans: Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1956: VII, 7226-7.)

¹⁷ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Vol. 46, File 22 – I-2-1076, *British West Indies 1953-1957*, “A Review of Immigration from the British West Indies,” January 14, 1955, 1

for and against immigration agreements with British West Indian countries. Not surprisingly, the latter category was much lengthier:

Argument Against an Immigration Agreement

It is not by accident that coloured British subjects other than the negligible numbers from the United Kingdom are excluded from Canada. It is from experience, generally speaking, that coloured people in the present state of the white man's thinking are not a tangible community asset, and as a result are more or less ostracized. Despite what has been said to the contrary, many cannot adapt themselves to our climatic conditions. To enter into an agreement which would have the effect of increasing coloured immigration to this country would be an act of misguided generosity since it would not have the effect of bringing about a worthwhile solution to the problem of coloured people and would quite likely intensify our own social and economic problem. I think that the biggest single argument against increasing coloured immigration to this country is the simple fact that the Canadian public is not prepared to accept them in any significant numbers.¹⁸

Lest there be any confusion about his advice (which was unlikely) Smith concluded "that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, and I would recommend that no action be taken in this regard this year."

Although Smith's memorandum addressed a proposal for a general agreement between Canada and the British West Indies, it is reasonable to assume that Pickersgill would have received identical advice from his immigration director concerning "girls" for domestic service. It is also clear that Pickersgill disregarded that advice. For Canada's Black community, the struggle for fairer immigration rules was in its infancy, and community leaders like Donald Moore remained justifiably critical. Years later, however, a publication commemorating the 1954 Negro Citizens' Association delegation to Ottawa explained that Moore and Pickersgill eventually grew to admire one another. "On visits to Toronto, the immigration minister would call Mr. Moore to find out if there were any cases that needed his immediate attention."¹⁹ Neither politics nor public opinion would permit major changes to immigration policy, but Pickersgill was at least prepared to make incremental adjustments to the rules, and to the nation's 'fundamental character.'

Pickersgill once again disregarded the advice of his officials in July 1955, following correspondence from representatives of another ethnic community. The Ukrainian Canadian Committee requested that "a suitable man" be dispatched to Europe, to identify Ukrainian refugees remaining in

¹⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁹ City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 431, Box 607200, File 11, "45th and 50th anniversaries of the delegation to Ottawa – 1999-2004, "50th Anniversary of the Historic Delegation to Ottawa Led by Donald Moore: A Souvenir Journal," April 25, 2004, 17.

Germany and Austria and to facilitate their immigration to Canada.²⁰ Pickersgill referred the request to his deputy minister Laval Fortier, who immediately objected to the idea, fearing criticism or similar requests “from other groups.”²¹ Pickersgill, however, overruled, announcing his commitment to the mission. Sending someone from within the Department, he reasoned, would ensure that the government retained “final control” over the project. Pickersgill also directed that the emissary should “look at all people in the remaining camps in Europe and not merely those of the Ukrainian race.”²² Dr. V. J. Kaye, a Ukrainian-Canadian academic and civil servant currently working in the Citizenship Branch, was appointed to the task, and the decision was duly conveyed to an appreciative Ukrainian Canadian Committee.

Kaye (whose actual name was Vladimir Kysilewsky) departed Canada on November 3, 1955. Accompanied by Donald Reid, the assistant director of Canadian immigration in the United Kingdom, he spent six weeks traveling through Europe, visiting camps in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland, and meeting with representatives of many refugee groups. Immediately upon his return to Canada, Kaye submitted a detailed report of his findings and recommendations. The statistics alone were staggering; ten years after the war some 22,000 refugees remained in Italy, more than 32,000 in Austria, and some 247,000 in Germany. “Conditions in all camps,” he reported, “were distressingly bad.”²³ There were, however, a number of measures that could be taken to alleviate the problem, and Kaye’s recommendations documented these in detail.

First, there was the problem of families that had become ‘split’ or separated, or whose emigration was prevented because of aged or disabled family members. Here Kaye recommended a relaxation of “existing rigid regulations,” permitting separated families to reunite and allowing “weaker” family members to emigrate with their family so long as “sufficient guaranty” was made for their support. Next, he urged a relaxation of rules applicable to refugees who had been convicted of minor criminal offences, many of which had involved theft of food or various black market activities. Canadian health requirements, he continued, were perceived to be “unduly high [and] exacting” by camp authorities, refugee agencies, and the UNHCR. “It would alleviate considerable hardship if Canadian medical authorities would accept applicants passed as healthy by local official medical authorities.”²⁴

²⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG 32 B34 Vol. 62, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. 1954-1957 (file no. 48)*, A.J. Yaremovich to Pickersgill, July 13, 1955.

²¹ *Ibid.*, “Memorandum to the Minister,” July 15, 1955.

²² *Ibid.*, Pickersgill to Fortier, July 18, 1955.

²³ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 48, File I-2-6939, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration*, “The Problem of Refugees in Europe,” December 27, 1955, 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

All of Kaye's recommendations urged a more humanitarian policy approach. He pointedly suggested that authorities should make better effort to inform relief agencies as changes were made to Canada's immigration regulations, and about the availability of financial assistance from voluntary agencies to cover the costs of medical and x-ray examinations. Kaye also noted that many refugees of Baltic, Ukrainian, and Russian origin had served in German army units during the war and had later misrepresented their military history in order to avoid repatriation to the Soviet Union. Such conduct, he argued, "should not be held against them, provided they now make a true and correct statement."²⁵ Mindful that the impetus for his mission had come from Canada's Ukrainian community, Kaye appended to his recommendations a detailed summary focused on the Ukrainian populations in the European camps. He noted that the largest Ukrainian groups were in Germany and Austria, at 22,000 and 7,500 respectively, with those living in Austria under the greatest danger of repatriation. Kaye estimated that around 2% of the Ukrainian refugees in Germany now wished to emigrate to Canada, and approximately 12% of those living in Austria.²⁶

Pickersgill acted swiftly on receiving Kaye's report, referring it to his officials for review. Not surprisingly, immigration director C.E.S. Smith (temporarily acting for Fortier as deputy minister) expressed reservations about several of Kaye's recommendations. While supportive of admission for refugees who had reliable sponsors to look after them, Smith opposed many of Kaye's other suggestions. With "separated families," the usual scenario was that some members had remained in Europe, unable to join relatives in Canada, on account of medical conditions. Smith disagreed with the recommendation that such persons should be admitted so long as they were "well enough to travel and provided the head of the family has made adequate arrangements for their ... maintenance."²⁷ Current procedures for such cases required approval from provincial authorities who would be responsible for providing medical treatment. At most, Smith argued, immigration officials might be instructed to inform the heads of families in Canada about those procedures. Any relaxation of the rules regarding criminal convictions was especially troubling to the senior bureaucrat: "I don't think it was Parliament's intention to grant their admission." Similarly, he foresaw problems with the admission of disabled refugees, warning that Canada already had "a number of amputation cases ... for whom we find it difficult to obtain permanent employment."²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁶ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 48, File I-2-6939, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration*, "Particulars about the Ukrainian Ethnic Group," December 27, 1955.

²⁷ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 48, File I-2-6939, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration*, "Memorandum To The Minister," February 1, 1956, 2-3.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

Smith's memorandum contains numerous hand-written margin notes bearing the initials JWP. Without exception, they indicated Pickersgill's support for Dr. Kaye's recommendations (over the objections of Smith and deputy minister Fortier) and they directed his officials to "get something going" on each one. On February 16, 1956 Pickersgill wrote to the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, setting out the policy decisions that had been implemented as a result of Kaye's report, applicable to both sponsored and unsponsored refugees. Permanent residents of Canada would now be permitted to apply "for the admission of any bona fide refugee, whether friend or relative," and approval would be granted upon demonstration of satisfactory settlement and employment arrangements. For separated-family cases, the government undertook to review all applications including those previously denied. Refusals based upon medical conditions might now be reversed on receipt of confirmation from provincial health authorities that satisfactory arrangements were in place for treatment. The Department was also prepared to review cases where admission had been denied by reason of some "relatively minor" criminal conviction, where the sponsor was a close relative of the prospective immigrant. With regard to unsponsored immigrants, Pickersgill pointed out that the selection criteria had recently been relaxed to place less emphasis on "specific occupational qualifications." Lastly, the assisted passage program would be extended to offer benefits to dependents where, in the opinion of an officer, the head of the family was likely to secure employment quickly.²⁹

European refugees were not the only such group in need of the government's attention in late 1955. A September memo from Fortier advised the minister of yet another urgent request, this time from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, an organization created in 1949 to address the problem of Palestinian refugees. Its officials, Fortier explained, were now asking "whether Canada would be prepared to accept a limited number of refugees as immigrants."³⁰ There were more than 900,000 refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Gaza, he noted, most of whom were agricultural peasants. However, "It is not from these that immigrants would be selected, but among the fraction of refugees who have been taught in the English language and who have professional training and technical skills."

Despite this reassuring detail, Fortier immediately made his (and Smith's) advice clear, perhaps anticipating his minister's response:

I have submitted this [request] to the Director of Immigration and in a memorandum dated September 15, he states: "I do not believe that encouragement should be offered in this regard and that Canada should continue as they have done in regard to the Shanghai refugees, i.e. in

²⁹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 48, File I-2-6939, *Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration*, Pickersgill to A.J. Yaremovich, February 16, 1956.

³⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 60, File I-2-6939B *Palestinian Refugees – United Nations Relief and Works Agency. 1955-1956*, "Memorandum For The Minister," September 21, 1955, 1.

supplying funds for their assistance rather than take any given number for resettlement here. Their ways of life are entirely different to ours and, no doubt, adjustment would take a considerable time.

Unless there would be some advantages from an international point of view ... I am inclined to agree with Mr. Smith. We have, a couple of years ago, accepted ... a certain number of Greeks for open placement but we met some resistance from potential employers, and we could expect that employers would offer the same resistance for these Palestinian refugees.³¹

Once again, Pickersgill's senior officials were advising against any agreement to accept immigrants from a traditionally non-preferred group, and once again he disregarded their counsel. A subsequent Branch memorandum summarized the progress of the initiative. "It was decided that Canada could admit 100 Palestinian refugees and their dependents," Fortier confirmed, "– about 300 to 400 persons." Continuing his report, Fortier could not hide his own antipathy toward the initiative:

This, of course, is on an experimental basis and the admission of an additional number dependent (sic) on the result. Selection is to be confined to Jordan and Lebanon as screening facilities are inadequate in Syria and Egypt. It was considered that they should be selected from among those with trades and skills most likely to find opportunity in Canada. A preferred occupational list has been sent to the Charge d'Affaires in Beirut.³²

Within the government, the main impetus for this initiative appears to have come from the Secretary of State for External Affairs. "I should be grateful if you could give your earnest attention to this matter," Lester Pearson wrote to Pickersgill on September 22, adding that the United States had already agreed to take 2,000 Palestinian refugees. He continued:

In view of our continuing financial assistance to the UNRWA, our increasing interests in the Middle East area and the sorry plight of the refugees, a token gesture by the Canadian Government would, I consider, have very beneficial results.³³

Unable to resist his senior colleague's persuasion (or perhaps his charm) Pickersgill agreed to the plan. It is clear, however, that in this case the immigration minister shared the significant political reservations of his senior officials. At Pickersgill's insistence, the press release announcing the admission of Palestinian refugees to Canada came from the Department of External Affairs, not from Citizenship

³¹ Ibid., 2-3.

³² LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 60, File I-2-6939B *Palestinian Refugees – United Nations Relief and Works Agency. 1955-1956*, "Memorandum To The Minister," November 10, 1955,

³³ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 60, File I-2-6939B *Palestinian Refugees – United Nations Relief and Works Agency. 1955-1956*, Pearson to Pickersgill, September 22, 1955.

and Immigration.³⁴ And, as an August 1956 summary made clear, the final numbers were considerably smaller than the original request of 300 to 400:

A large number [of refugees] had to be refused. ... [I]n some cases the head of the family was over-age, [while others] were found to be suffering from trachoma or tuberculosis.

When examinations were completed, a total of 98 individuals had been accepted ... - 40 single persons and 13 heads of families with 45 dependents. Their occupations were welders, diesel and automotive mechanics, house painters, typists, etc.

The first group of twenty-six persons, Smith acknowledged, arrived in April 1956, and “created a very favourable impression.” By August the number had increased to thirty-eight. The newcomers were carefully distributed among larger centres: Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, London, and Port Arthur, with the “remainder” expected to arrive over the ensuing months. These reduced numbers, staggered arrival dates, and the wide dispersal of the Palestinian refugees throughout eastern Canada undoubtedly reassured the deputy minister and the immigration branch director that the risk of political damage had been minimized.³⁵

The precise demographic impact of the various policy changes and initiatives of 1955-56 cannot be measured. (As noted earlier, Canada’s official immigration statistics did not distinguish refugees from other immigrant groups or even recognize refugees as a distinct category until 1969³⁶.) Some insights, however, may be drawn from the published data. For 1956 and 1957 immigrants entering from Germany increased in number to 26,061 and 28,430 (from 17,630 in 1955), suggesting that the government’s refugee initiative in that country brought some results.³⁷ The number of immigrants born in Greece increased during the same period, from 2,927 in 1955 to 5,078 in 1956 and 5,464 in 1957.³⁸ Similarly, immigrants of Yugoslavian origin increased to 5,771 in 1957, from 1,416 in 1955.³⁹ The number of immigrants identified as “Negro” in origin increased slightly, from 414 in 1955 to 572 in 1956 and 723 in 1957, a result of the “domestic service” program.⁴⁰ An increase in immigrants of Jewish “origin” was also documented, from 1,660 in 1955 to 6,037 in 1957, although no record seems to have been made of the countries of origin for this group. Surprisingly, however, both Ukrainian and Baltic (Estonian,

³⁴ A hand-written margin note on the November 10 memo stated: “Let publicity come from External. JWP 10. XI. 55.” (See footnote 30, above.)

³⁵ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 62, File No. 60, File I-2-6939B *Palestinian Refugees – United Nations Relief and Works Agency. 1955-1956*, “Subject: Movement of Palestinian Refugees,” August 7, 1956.

³⁶ See above, Chapter 3, page 46n2.

³⁷ *Canada Year Book, 1959*, 179, “Chart 2.- Immigrant Admissions by Country of Last Permanent Residence.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 181, “Chart 5.- Birthplaces of Immigrant Arrivals 1955-57.”

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 182, “Chart 7.- Origins of Immigrant Arrivals 1955-1957.”

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

Latvian, Lithuanian) immigration to Canada declined, or increased only slightly, during the years in this period.⁴¹

By mid-1956, Pickersgill might have reflected with considerable satisfaction on his time as minister. The parliamentary uproar of the previous year had passed, and the initiatives undertaken in response to various international pressures had been implemented without public furor. The extensive bureaucracy he led had grown since 1950, but its costs (as they were presented to Parliament) appeared to be carefully contained. His Department's projected overall budget for 1956-7 of \$9,160,832 represented a slight increase over the previous year's \$8,874,205, but remained far below the \$20.5 million budgeted for the year 1950, when the department was established.⁴²

The Immigration Branch consisted of a main office with an annual budget of \$850,000, and a much larger Administrative Services section containing three separate divisions. The Admissions Division was broadly responsible for policy "relating to the admissibility of immigrants and non-immigrants, implementation and control of the regulations and procedures dealing with admissions, appeals and deportation, [and] decisions on application by persons residing in countries where full immigration facilities are not available."⁴³ The Operations Division was charged with "the provision of inspection and office facilities and the management of field operations in the five immigration districts in Canada and the 20 offices abroad." It was also responsible for staff training, the development of operational policy and procedures for border inspection and overseas processing, performance standards, and discipline.⁴⁴ The Settlement Division conducted surveys across Canada "to determine the need for and the opportunities available to newcomers." It assisted immigrants with their search for employment or to establish their own business, operating in conjunction with municipal and provincial authorities or agencies.⁴⁵

The third and largest component of the Immigration Branch' operations was its Field and Inspection Service. It had a budget for 1956-7 of slightly less than \$6 million and was divided into two areas. The mandate of the "Field and Inspection Service – Canada" was the "examination of all persons seeking entry into Canada and their admission or rejection in accordance with the provisions of the Immigration Act; for boards of inquiry; [and] for detention and deportation of undesirables." By 1956

⁴¹ Ibid., 182. The numbers for these groups, for 1955-56-57 were: Ukrainian – 560; 578; 530; Estonian – 194; 166; 226; Latvian – 356; 342; 434; Lithuanian – 191; 216; 190.

⁴² LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 16, *Estimates. Citizenship and Immigration Part I 1956-1957, (file #11)*, "Estimates, 1956-57, Department of Citizenship and Immigration." 1.

⁴³ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

there were 346 “officially designated ports of entry across Canada” (an increase from 269 in 1950), of which 124 were staffed by full-time immigration officers.”⁴⁶ The other area was the “Field and Inspectional Service – Abroad.” Its mandate included:

the development and identification of the immigration potential through publicity by films, posters, lecture tours, office interviews and counselling; the selection of suitable and desirable immigrants; the civil and medical examination of immigrants and the issue of visas.⁴⁷

The Section maintained the Branch’s twenty overseas offices: London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Paris, Hanover, Karlsruhe, Brussels, Berne, Rome, Athens, Oslo, Copenhagen, The Hague, Vienna, Stockholm, New Delhi, Hong Kong, and Tel Aviv. With this number of international locations, an annual budget (for 1956) of \$1.8 million seemed modest; in any event it was less than one-third of the overall Field Service budget of \$5,857,351.⁴⁸

Archival records for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration also document a near-obsessive attention to controlling expenditures. An October 1954 letter from his predecessor (and now finance minister) Walter Harris exhorted Pickersgill toward “renewed effort to achieve the greatest possible efficiency in the operational activities of the Government.” Overall, Harris confided, government revenue levels were a cause for concern, and a deficit of some \$200 million was anticipated for the current year. Moreover, the increasing size of the civil service was receiving “a good deal of adverse publicity.” Harris therefore requested his colleague’s “personal cooperation in examining all possibilities” for economy in his department’s operations.⁴⁹

It is probable that other cabinet ministers received similar communications at budget time. (Pickersgill received an almost identical letter a year later, in October 1955; this time, Harris attributed budgetary pressures to expenditures “of a relatively uncontrollable nature” such as old age security, family allowances, and tax rental payments to the provinces.⁵⁰) It is clear, however, that Pickersgill took the requests to heart, ensuring that yearly expenditures relating to immigration were scrupulously monitored and kept to an absolute minimum. For example, briefing materials for his Department’s 1955 estimates carefully noted that the replacement periods for staff uniforms were being extended. Henceforth, an immigration officer would be entitled to “1 summer and one winter suit ... every second

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43; also LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 16, *File E-1-1 Estimates. Citizenship and Immigration Part 3 1956-57 (file #13)*, “Field and Inspection Service – Abroad,” 67.

⁴⁹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 16, *File E-1-1 Estimates. Citizenship and Immigration, 1955-1956, (file #7)*, Harris to Pickersgill, October 8, 1954.

⁵⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 16, *File E-1-1 Estimates: Citizenship and Immigration, 1956-1957*, Harris to Pickersgill, October 14, 1955.

year,” an overcoat “every fourth year,” and “2 uniform caps, one summer and one winter every second year.”⁵¹ For the 811 immigration officers eligible for uniforms in 1956, the Department submitted a budget item of \$82,999, approximately \$100 per officer. Such parsimony appeared entirely consistent with the government’s perennial efforts to avoid both publicity and scrutiny of its immigration program. It was essential to avoid any appearance that the department was extravagant in its operations (or its employees excessively fashionable in their dress).

As a topic of debate in Parliament, immigration had all but vanished by mid-1955 as other issues began to engage the attention of the opposition. A fractious debate over proposed amendments to the 1951 *Defence Production Act* in June and July 1955 was one such issue which proved damaging to the government. The amending bill proposed to continue indefinitely the operation of the Department of Defence Production, removing an expiry date for the department set by the original legislation. The bill’s technical status as a “money bill,” allowed the opposition to seize an opportunity to filibuster the measure by unlimited debate. Removing the expiry date would mean a continuation of the Act’s executive powers in respect of any contracts, materials, or services designated as essential for defence production purposes, and the opposition objected to the perpetuation of such broad “regulatory and requisitioning powers.”⁵² Echoing the criticisms his party had directed toward Liberal immigration policy in 1949,⁵³ Donald Fleming launched the debate, charging the government with arrogance, the pursuit of absolute power and the subjugation of Parliament.⁵⁴ Pickersgill later speculated that he might have recognized the danger posed by this matter “if I had not been so fully absorbed in my own departmental difficulties in Parliament.” As it was, however, “the government made every imaginable mistake” in its handling of the Defense Production bill.⁵⁵ The resulting political damage was extensive. More allegations of Liberal contempt for Parliament would damage the government during the bitter 1956 debate over the construction of the Trans-Canada Pipeline.

Although the debate over immigration had subsided, there were still concerns confronting the government in 1956. The major problem now was numerical: Canada’s annual immigration intake had shown an alarming decline since the postwar high of 194,400 in 1951, to 154,000 in 1954 and less than 110,000 in 1955.⁵⁶ The reasons for the trend were clear; improving economic conditions in Europe meant

⁵¹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 16, *Estimates. Citizenship and Immigration Part I 1956-1957, (file #11)*, “Estimates, 1956-57, Department of Citizenship and Immigration,” 52.

⁵² Meisel, *The Canadian General Election of 1957*, 7-8.

⁵³ See above, Chapter 4, pages 85-7.

⁵⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1955: IV, 4512-27.

⁵⁵ Pickersgill, *My Years with Louis St Laurent: A Political Memoir*, 261-2.

⁵⁶ *Canada Year Book, 1957-58*, 176.

a reduction in the number of people seeking to emigrate from Britain and from other traditionally 'preferred' European countries.

As in 1955, Cabinet records for 1956 show the government exploring several initiatives to address the problem of declining intake. On May 4, Pickersgill confirmed the obvious to his colleagues: "The potential source of immigrants from Europe was drying up." In particular, a shortage of farm labour was now anticipated for the year, particularly in Ontario. The mining industry was also experiencing labour shortages. There was, however, a potential solution. A "steady stream of refugees from East Germany" were currently making their way into West Germany and Austria. Canada's labour deficit could be quickly addressed, Pickersgill noted, "by dispensing with the normal procedures for security screening" for a period of about six weeks. He reassured his colleagues that "[n]o publicity would be given to such action, of course, and the risk of getting planted communist agents in this short period seemed rather small." Undoubtedly the avoidance of publicity was also intended to minimize the risk of political fallout. Cabinet quickly approved the proposal.⁵⁷

Two months later, immigration was back on the Cabinet's agenda.⁵⁸ This time, both the analysis of the issue and the proposals offered to address it were more detailed. The recent reduction in intake, Pickersgill now explained, was not solely attributable to improved conditions in Europe. There had also been extensive "adverse publicity given abroad to employment conditions in Canada" in 1954-5 by "individuals or organizations only interested in migration ... for commercial or other needs." Another factor was "the more complete social security benefits available in most European countries." The minister recommended a number of measures to address the problem, beginning with the creation of four new immigration offices in Britain and France. A full-time officer would also be posted in Spain, to handle applications from that country and from Portugal. Overseas advertising would be re-invigorated by having the Department take over all responsibility for publicity currently being carried out by transportation company agents. Invitations would be extended to European government officials, journalists, and agricultural representatives, to visit Canada and explore opportunities available to immigrants, especially in agriculture. These proposals, however, did not receive immediate support. Concerned that their international implications "had not been discussed with any foreign government," the cabinet deferred any decision "pending consideration ... by the Secretary of State for External Affairs."⁵⁹ One week later, Cabinet approved the plan after receiving assurance that the External Affairs

⁵⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15018, May 4, 1956, "Financial Measures to assist immigration." LAC RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2659, Microfilm Reel No. T-12184

⁵⁸ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15239, July 31, 1956, "Immigration; measures to expand activities," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

minister had no objection “in principle,” but stipulated that Pearson should continue to be consulted on “the details.”⁶⁰

As the government contemplated immigration policy for 1957, it had reason to be optimistic. Pickersgill reported that immigrant arrivals for 1956 had increased substantially over the previous year. He attributed the increase to several factors, including “knowledge of Canada’s buoyant economy, the broadening of selection criteria, the extension of ... the Assisted Passage Loan Scheme ... and increased promotional activity.”⁶¹ Having concluded that Canada could absorb more immigrants than could possibly be recruited for 1957, the Cabinet established no numerical target for the year. Selection criteria and financial assistance programs would remain unchanged, with “promotional and recruiting activity intensified where possible.”⁶² A confidential memorandum summarized the details agreed upon by cabinet on October 25. Most notably, selection criteria would be maintained from 1956, which meant that “immigrants [would] be selected primarily because of their general suitability, desirability and adaptability.”⁶³ A further initiative implemented in early November proposed a relaxation of the rules applicable to the sponsorship of immigrants by employers. (Current sponsorship rules required employers to have “personal knowledge” of the qualifications of persons they proposed to sponsor. This restrictive condition was removed.⁶⁴) Communications with immigration staff at “Posts Abroad” advised that other branches of government would also participate in the expanded recruitment effort: “The Deputy Minister of the Department of Trade and Commerce will be instructing Canadian Trade Commissioners, in the countries in which you are located, to take a more active part in the promotion of immigration to Canada.”⁶⁵ Whether this more open approach would have proved permanent, or a temporary aberration, cannot be known, as within a matter of days international developments would dramatically alter the course of immigration policy for 1957.

By late 1956, Pickersgill considered the government’s cautious, methodical approach to immigration a success. His correspondence revealed his continuing commitment to the policy principles

⁶⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15266, August 8, 1956, “Immigration; extension of activities,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

⁶¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15377, October 25, 1956, “Immigration to Canada, 1957,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 45, file 5 (I-2-428P) *Immigration Programme 1957*, “Confidential: Record of Cabinet Decision, Meeting of October 25th, 1956, Immigration to Canada – 1957.”

⁶⁴ Ibid., “Memorandum to Cabinet,” November 6, 1956. Cabinet approved the proposal on the following day: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15430, November 7, 1956, “Immigration; extension of sponsored cases,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 5775, Microfilm Reel No. T-12185.

⁶⁵ LAC Immigration Branch Records RG 76, vols. 940-941, *Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1956 Binder #24, part 2*, “Subject – Promotion of Immigration by Trade Commissioners”, November 7, 1956.

set out by Mackenzie King a decade earlier.⁶⁶ And like his former chief, Pickersgill paid careful attention to the opinions directed toward his department, not hesitating to provide detailed responses even to critical writers. Never inclined to shy away from a lively exchange of views, Pickersgill's correspondence shows him endeavouring to win over the skeptics and critics one by one. "I could not, of course, agree with you," he admonished one concerned citizen who suggested that crime rates were highest among newcomers.⁶⁷ To another, he affirmed the government's commitment to giving "considerable preference" to immigrants from Britain, but explained that it was often difficult to find British immigrants who were willing to accept "the less agreeable jobs that have to be done."⁶⁸ Another writer, concerned that "very little is done to assist new arrivals in Canada, received a detailed (three page) response outlining the services provided by his department and by the National Employment Service. Another received a detailed account of the revised selection criteria implemented for 1956."⁶⁹

Like Mackenzie King (but unlike Louis St. Laurent) Pickersgill appeared to pay careful attention to the correspondence he received for what it told him of public opinion. Among those who wrote was an old friend, imploring "Dear Jack" to stand firm against any idea of West Indian immigration. Arthur Lower deviously invoked an argument that he knew would resonate with Pickersgill: "[A]s Mr. King used to say, people who try to do good cause more harm in the world than those who simply try to avoid evil." Allowing Blacks into Canada, Lower warned, would only perpetuate the myth that "if we are all tolerant enough unlike groups can get along together."⁷⁰

Old prejudices obviously died hard. But Lower's exclusionist views were by no means unique. A March 1956 memorandum from the National Liberal Federation summarized for Pickersgill the views expressed by Canadians in a recent CIPO/Gallup poll. The poll's premise was convoluted, but there was no mistaking its results: "Canadian voters who ... are split between those who give general approval to Canada's immigration policies, and those who disapprove, show greater unanimity when given a chance

⁶⁶ "I agree," Pickersgill reassured one complaining writer, "that we don't want to admit a large number of immigrants from any country to change the fundamental character of our population or to endanger the survival of our institutions, and I can assure you that that consideration is always the first one on my mind." LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 44, file 22 (I-2-428E) *Comments on Policy 1954-1955*, Pickersgill to W.W. Cruise, Toronto, October 8, 1955.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See note 65 above, Pickersgill to Cruise.

⁶⁹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 44, file 24 (I-2-428E) *Comments on Immigration Policy 1956-1957*, Pickersgill to the Rev. K.T. Smits, Wooler, Ont., February 10, 1957.

⁷⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 47 file 1, *British West Indies 1954-1957*, Lower to Pickersgill, September 24, 1955.

to vote on discriminatory immigration.”⁷¹ The question put to respondents, and the results, were very clear:

“At the present time, it is harder for people of some countries to get into Canada than it is for others. Do you approve or disapprove of this policy?”

Approve: 59%
Disapprove: 24%
No opinion: 17%⁷²

In some regions of the country, approval for this stated policy was even greater. (The report specifically identified the Maritime provinces here.) Such data almost certainly guaranteed that there would be no relaxation of admission restrictions on those immigrant groups traditionally viewed as least-preferred, in the foreseeable future.

With an election looming in 1957, Pickersgill planned a trip to Europe in November 1956. The pretext would be visits to Canada’s immigration offices in Amsterdam, Paris, and England, and his attendance at the official opening of a new office at Cologne. The itinerary also included a leisurely weekend in the south of France, visiting old friends from the minister’s Oxford days. In early November, however, the eruption of international crises in Egypt (over the Suez Canal) and in Hungary forced Pickersgill to cancel his trip. As an emergency session of Parliament convened and the government contemplated its response to both situations, Pickersgill’s presence was required in Ottawa.

Both the Suez crisis and the Hungarian uprising would have significant implications for Canadian immigration.⁷³ It was the latter crisis, however, which presented the most immediate concern for Pickersgill’s department. The Hungarian revolution began in October with a series of demonstrations in support of recent anti-Soviet protests in Poland. As the uprising escalated, Hungary’s communist government collapsed and was briefly replaced by a more liberal administration. On November 4, Soviet troops invaded, crushing the revolt and installing a new Soviet-backed government. Several thousand Hungarians were killed in the ensuing conflict, and some 200,000 fled into Austria as refugees. Immediately there were calls for the international community to help alleviate the refugee crisis confronting Austria.

⁷¹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 45, file 3 (I-2-428P), “Immigration Program 1955, CIPO-Gallup Poll, Wednesday February 29, 1956,” H.E. Kidd, National Liberal Federation, to Pickersgill, March 1, 1956.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Some 109,000 British citizens immigrated to Canada “in the wake of the Eden government’s bungled Suez venture”: Keyserlingk (ed.) *Breaking Ground*, viii. This represented a significant increase from the 43-46,000 annual totals between 1952 and 1954: *Canada Year Book*, 1955, 182.

The government's initial reaction to the crisis was restrained. Speaking on November 13 to the Liberal Businessmen's Club in Toronto, Pickersgill mostly confined himself to generalities, reviewing the year's increased numbers in immigrants from Britain and the U.S. The Hungarian situation was secondary; the government had contributed \$100,000 to Red Cross relief efforts and made available an R.C.A.F. airplane to carry supplies. Another \$100,000 had been given to the UN High Commission for Refugees. As for any Hungarians who might seek refuge in Canada, Pickersgill confirmed that the government would "make the necessary administrative arrangements" to deal with all applications that might be received. He pronounced himself "hopeful" that Canada might get some "new settlers from among these refugees," but cautioned his audience against too much optimism. Thus far, he explained, most of the refugees were "women and children and old people ... [who were] not in a position to decide right away" whether to undertake the challenge of relocation to a new country.⁷⁴

The government's level of engagement with the Hungarian crisis escalated gradually during November. In the emergency session of Parliament, opposition members demanded a response, moving an amendment to the session's throne speech castigating the government's failure to take "adequate action to extend refuge to the patriots of Hungary."⁷⁵ Now on the defensive, on November 26 Pickersgill summarized the actions which the government had taken. During the first week or more of the crisis there was little to be done, as few refugees had begun to contemplate permanent relocation. During that period, Pickersgill explained, "I issued instructions to our office in Vienna that priority was to be given to applications from these Hungarian refugees." He also arranged for additional staff to be transferred to Vienna if needed. When in mid-November it became apparent that some refugees were indeed interested in Canada, an offer had been extended to send Canadian immigration staff into the refugee camps, but the Austrian government had declined, preferring to control the process by identifying those wishing to emigrate and directing them to the Canadian authorities. Pickersgill acceded, but instructed his immigration staff that assisted passage was to be offered to anyone who wanted to come to Canada "without regard to what means he had." Ordinary application procedures – medical examinations, x-rays, and administrative paperwork – had been suspended to facilitate the movement of refugees.⁷⁶

As the magnitude of the crisis grew, Pickersgill's activities moved beyond issuing instructions to program staff. He contacted Canada's two major airline carriers, along with shipping companies, to mobilize all available transportation capacity in a mass 'airlift.' Realizing that shelter and settlement

⁷⁴ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 55, file 35 (I-2-5545B) *Hungarian Refugees. General Comments 1956-1957*, "Extracts from Speech by the Hon. J.W. Pickersgill, M.P. to the Liberal Businessmen's Club of Toronto, November 13th, 1956."

⁷⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1956: 4th (Special) Session: I, 36.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-40.

challenges would be enormous once refugees began to arrive, he arranged to bring together social agencies and the representatives of provincial departments interested in immigration matters.⁷⁷ He then reinstated his own travel plans, re-scheduling a flight to Europe for November 30 following the end of the parliamentary session. Still, some prompting was needed to direct his focus away from England and France and toward Vienna. “I have been wondering,” Norman Robertson, Canada’s High Commissioner in London gently suggested, “whether ... you should ... go straight to Vienna ... before coming to London.” It was important, Robertson explained, that

[T]he emphasis in publicity attending your visit should be on the refugee aspect of immigration rather than ordinary emigration from the United Kingdom to Canada which is going on pretty satisfactorily and can only be helped by wider information about the welcome and opportunity Canada is ready to give the refugees.⁷⁸

The minister’s itinerary, which initially did not include any time in Austria, was revised accordingly (although the weekend in the south of France remained on it).⁷⁹

Upon his arrival in Europe, Pickersgill grasped the enormity of the challenge which confronted him and assumed direct operational command. Departmental directives immediately began to issue, notifying Immigration Branch staff of decisions already taken and setting out the administrative components of the initiative.⁸⁰ A special “Hungarian Refugee Section” was created in the Immigration Branch headquarters to deal with the project.⁸¹ The magnitude and the political importance of the initiative were carefully explained to immigration staff:

It is expected that the Hungarian refugee movement to Canada may be more than 30,000 persons in ... the next four or five months. This estimate is not to be given publicity but inquirers may be informed that we expect a substantial movement of refugees into this country.⁸²

Staff were also cautioned that some refugees were expected to be ill or distressed, and unable to undertake employment immediately. “There will, therefore, be both short and long term problems associated with this movement.” Numerous volunteer agencies were also being mobilized to help.⁸³

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 57, file 19 *Hungarian Refugees. Minister’s Trip 1956*. “Secret – Following for Pickersgill from Robertson,” November 26, 1956.

⁷⁹ Ibid., “Itinerary (Revised)” and “Telegram,” Pickersgill to Ritchie, November 28, 1956.

⁸⁰ For example, see: LAC Immigration Branch Records RG 76, vols. 940-941, *Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1956 Binder #24, part 2*, “Subject – Free Transportation – Hungarian Refugees.” December 5, 1956.

⁸¹ Ibid., “Subject: Hungarian Refugee Section,” December 14, 1956.

⁸² Ibid., “Subject: Hungarian Refugee Movement – Voluntary Agencies,” December 6, 1956.

⁸³ Ibid.

Several volumes of Pickersgill's files related to the Hungarian refugee initiative have recently been opened for the first time. They document the administrative details of a massive undertaking, and Pickersgill's direct coordinating role. First, there was the logistical challenge of securing passage for the refugees (by rail or air) from Vienna to various European ports and airports, and onward to Canada. The minister personally negotiated many of these arrangements, confirming them in writing. His memorandum of agreement with G.W.G. McConachie, President of Canadian Pacific Airlines, provided one example:

The Government of Canada, represented by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, requests Canadian Pacific Airlines Limited, to charter, and Canadian Pacific agrees to charter to the Government of Canada a minimum of five flights during the month of December 1956, between Vancouver, Canada and Vienna, Austria, for the purpose of transporting Hungarian refugees ... to Vancouver.

Canadian Pacific shall be paid the sum of \$2.75 per statute mile.⁸⁴

Similar negotiations were concluded with other organizations. For example, a cable from Pickersgill confirmed an agreement whereby the ICEM in Geneva would "take over arrangements" to transport 800 refugees departing for Canada on January 6, and a further 1,000 later in January.⁸⁵ The role to be undertaken by the Canadian provinces also had to be clarified. (A November 30 letter from the prime minister to the provincial premiers had initially broached that matter.⁸⁶) And in one of the initiative's best-known outcomes, Pickersgill called upon his personal contacts among Canadian businesses and universities to secure employment and academic placements for Hungarian refugees who were university students or faculty members.⁸⁷

As with all immigration matters, there were political concerns to be managed. There were interviews, meetings, and public appearances to make while in Europe, to ensure recognition for the initiative both internationally and at home. (At the outset of the trip, a preparatory memorandum had carefully noted that "Austrian Radio, Television and Federal Press Service have undertaken coverage," and the CBC was doing likewise.⁸⁸ This was crucial; only favourable press coverage could ensure a favourable public response in Canada to the initiative.) And there were the domestic problems presented

⁸⁴ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 55, File I-2-5545F *Hungarian Refugees. Transportation To Canada. Air Flights and Ships Statistics*, Pickersgill to G.W.G. McConachie, November 30, 1956.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Pickersgill to Pierre Jacobsen, ICEM Geneva, December 11, 1956.

⁸⁶ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 56, File I-2-5545e *Hungarian Refugees. Prince Edward Island 1957*, "Telegraph," St. Laurent to provincial premiers, November 30, 1956.

⁸⁷ Pickersgill's most detailed published account is in *My Years with Louis St. Laurent*, 241-5. He summarized his trip to Europe to Parliament in January 1957: Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1957: I, 661-8

⁸⁸ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 57, file 19 *Hungarian Refugees. Minister's Trip 1956*, "Visit of the Hon. J.W. Pickersgill to Vienna, December 1-3."

by opposition criticism (now increasingly emanating from the provincial level), and by public ambivalence toward immigrants which never completely subsided.

Pickersgill's adroit handling of these political issues, both at home and abroad, was perhaps as noteworthy as the initiative's humanitarian nature and scope. In Cologne, he flattered his German hosts "with words of high appreciation for the German immigrants who were very much liked in Canada."⁸⁹ Then, in a series of political and diplomatic master-strokes, he negotiated arrangements with European countries that would avoid a perennial domestic problem:

In order to relieve the situation in the refugee camps in Austria and at the same time to avoid overloading the reception machinery in Canada, ... I made arrangements ... whereby Canada agrees to accept 8,000 refugees from the United Kingdom and France after April 1 on the understanding those countries take an additional equivalent number immediately. Arrangements were made in the Netherlands also to hold until Spring 2,000 Hungarian refugees.⁹⁰

This plan benefitted all parties, relieving some of the immediate pressure on Austria and permitting other countries to contribute without making long-term commitments. But most importantly for Pickersgill, it delayed the arrival in Canada of thousands of refugees until the following spring, thereby addressing the chronic concern that immigration should always be curtailed in wintertime due to seasonal employment fluctuations.

With the provinces, the political issues were especially challenging. Several, including Saskatchewan and Manitoba, responded quickly and positively to the prime minister's call for support. Ontario, however, presented concerns. On November 28, prior to Pickersgill's departure for Europe, Conservative Premier Leslie Frost grandly announced the marshalling of "all the resources of Ontario" in response to the Hungarian crisis. Frost had been distancing himself from the federal Liberals in recent months, anticipating the possibility of a more favourable relationship in the event of a change of government in Ottawa. Now he saw political opportunity in Ottawa's hesitant initial response to events in Hungary, and vowed his province "will not wait for Hungarians to be processed by other organizations." Skilled provincial representatives, including recruiters and interpreters, would be dispatched immediately to Europe under the leadership of the Province's Agent-General in England. "Canadians," Frost declared,

⁸⁹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 18, File I-13 *Immigration and Racial Balance 1955*, "Representative Press Announcements on Mr. Pickersgill's Visit to Germany, the Opening of the Visa Section in Cologne, and the Acceptance by Canada of Hungarian Refugees." (See especially: "Why don't you take more Germans?" *Kolnische Rundschau* (Cologne), December 6, 1956 and "Distress Broke Bureaucratic Barriers," *Nordsee-Zeitung* (Bremerhaven), December 3, 1956.)

⁹⁰ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 55, File 38, (I-2-5545B) *Hungarian Refugees General Comments 1956-1957*, Pickersgill to Mrs. G.C. Parker, January 28, 1957.

“cannot continue to sit on their hands.”⁹¹ It seemed that there would be no limits to Ontario’s largesse in response to the refugee matter.

There was no mistaking the message within Frost’s remarks, and his government continued to claim full credit in December. Welcoming a group of Hungarian refugees in Toronto, Planning and Development Minister William Nickle announced that their flight and reception in Toronto were made possible “by the humane and understanding thinking on the part of the prime minister of Ontario, the Honourable Leslie Frost.”⁹² For Pickersgill, the provincial attitude was especially galling because it bore no resemblance to the positions being advanced in private. In November, Frost’s government had undertaken to establish a reception facility in Toronto, and to ensure that medical and nursing facilities were available for arriving refugees. By February, however, Ontario was complaining about its ‘capital expenditures’ for the initiative, now expected to reach \$636,000 by March, and demanding that the federal government should reimburse 75% of those costs.⁹³

An irate Pickersgill responded to Frost following his return from Europe. The federal government had been clear from the outset that the relief effort would only succeed with “all the help we can get from everyone able to help us.”⁹⁴ He reminded Frost that “Mr. Nickle had given me repeated indications” that Ontario would accept the reimbursement being offered to all provinces who received refugees,” namely \$3.00 per day for each person, for accommodation and food:

This is what we are doing ... in the case of any other province which has provided such facilities and also in the case of certain public-spirited organizations which have done the same. It is obvious that we would not be justified in paying any higher rate to the government of Ontario than we are paying to other governments or public-spirited organizations.⁹⁵

Ottawa, Pickersgill confirmed, was also prepared to reimburse the provincial government for any expenditures made on clothing for refugees. For any who were indigent and in need of hospital care, the federal government would reimburse all such costs during the first year, “if the province will in turn undertake the full care of all refugees settled in the province at the end of the first year.”⁹⁶ Although

⁹¹ “No Strings to Invitation, Province Tells Hungarians,” *Globe and Mail*, November 28, 1956, 2. See also “Ottawa Steps Up Refugee Plans; Ontario Seeks a Faster Airlift,” *Globe and Mail*, November, 27, 1956, 1; “Ontario Takes All Steps To Get Refugees,” *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, November 28, 1956, 4.

⁹² “Mayor Phillips Speaks Hungarian to Welcome Refugees,” *Toronto Daily Star*, December 7, 1956, 33.

⁹³ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 56, File I-2-5545 (Ont.) *Hungarian Refugees (1956-1957)*, “Memorandum to the Minister Re: Agreement with Ontario” January 29, 1957.

⁹⁴ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1956: 4th (Special) Session: I, 40.

⁹⁵ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 56, File I-2-5545 (Ont.) *Hungarian Refugees (1956-1957)*, Pickersgill to Frost, February 28, 1957. Also see: *Ibid.*, “Memorandum to the Minister Re: Agreement with Ontario,” January 29, 1957.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Pickersgill's files contain no further response from Frost, the provincial premier had no alternative but to accept the federal 'offer.' Undoubtedly his relationship with Diefenbaker continued to grow closer.

Pickersgill's leadership of Canada's response to the Hungarian crisis was his greatest achievement as immigration minister – “as useful as anything I did in public life”⁹⁷ – and he rightfully deserved much credit for the success of the initiative. (On January 25, 1957, he provided a detailed summary to Parliament of his decisions and activities while in Europe.⁹⁸) He did not, of course, complete the entire project single-handedly. Parliament acted with near unanimity to approve supply motions of \$1,000,000, in November 1956, and a further \$9,000,000 in January 1957.⁹⁹ Individual cabinet members utilized their provincial contacts to secure university placements for refugees in British Columbia, Manitoba, and Toronto; collectively, they granted Pickersgill full discretion to take any action he deemed necessary, regardless of cost. Politically, this was a bold approach. Finance minister Walter Harris had carefully budgeted for a small surplus for the election year ahead, but nevertheless immediately supported the *carte blanche* approval: “Harris said it was the right thing to do, and that whatever the cost, he would support me.”¹⁰⁰

Vital support for the initiative also came from beyond the cabinet. Provincial governments, universities, and some private corporations offered resources and support, as did many community groups and church organizations, helping especially with settlement activities. “We have had the most magnificent co-operation from voluntary organizations all over this country,” Pickersgill acknowledged, “and I cannot speak too highly of them.”¹⁰¹ A final component – vitally important but barely recognized, even in Pickersgill's accounts – was the work performed by immigration branch officers and staff. The minister directed the redeployment of some overseas staff to Vienna and other European cities to process the refugees bound for Canada. Seventeen officers were dispatched from Canada to London alone. Several former immigration branch employees have provided brief and modest accounts of the effort involved in the project. As one member of the minister's office staff recalled: “Everyone in the

⁹⁷ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 436.

⁹⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1957: I, 661-8.

⁹⁹ Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 1956, 4th (Special) Session: I, 148 and 1957: 1, 690. The final cost totaled \$14.5 million.

¹⁰⁰ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 433. The surplus for 1957 was estimated at \$152 million: Evans, “The Canadian Federal Budget of 1957,” 94.

¹⁰¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1957:1, 666.

department engaged in the movement, from the Minister down to the most junior clerk, worked around the clock for four full months.”¹⁰²

Unfortunately, details of the contributions of program staff seem to have been lost to history. A proper record of them might support the recollections of one former officer who described a gradual transformation within the immigration bureaucracy in the decade following World War Two. During that period, the officer recalled, immigration staff “worked directly with those most interested in immigration – immigrants and their families – and we began to understand the human values inherent in our work.”¹⁰³ These brief insights into the enthusiastic role played by immigration branch staff suggest that by the time of the Hungarian crisis, the ‘gatekeeper’ mentality of Blair, Joliffe, and others, had begun to disappear from Canada’s immigration bureaucracy.

Canada’s twenty-second Parliament was prorogued on April 12, 1957 and an election was called for June 10. As the campaign began, the government directed overseas immigration staff to reduce the flow of refugees into Canada. The “very heavy influx” early in the year was now causing concern, given the “possibilities that some will have difficulties in obtaining employment in the fall.” Open placement visas would be discontinued after July 31, and Hungarian refugee admissions would be limited to those sponsored by Canadian residents, or to cases of “exceptional merit.”¹⁰⁴

Whether economic considerations factored in this decision, old and familiar political concerns almost certainly provided the primary impetus. Although immigration from Britain increased exponentially in the aftermath of Suez, the British immigrants had come under normal application procedures which were suspended for the Hungarians refugees. As Pickersgill later acknowledged, the government “anticipated criticism that [it] was more concerned about Hungarians than British immigrants”.¹⁰⁵ And as Fortier reminded External Affairs undersecretary Jules Leger, “we have to take into consideration the Canadian public opinion” which had always favoured immigrants from Britain, France, and northern Europe. Public support for the Hungarian refugees, so strong early in the year, was now declining even among Hungarian-Canadian employers.¹⁰⁶ We must recognize, Fortier cautioned, “that a refugee differs from an ordinary immigrant in that he has not prepared ... or chosen to immigrate.”

¹⁰² John Manion, “The Hungarian Refugee Movement: Implementing the Policy,” in Keyserlingk (ed.) *Breaking Ground*, 56. Keyserlingk’s commemorative anthology also includes the recollections of former civil servants Harry Cunliffe and Earl McCarthy.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Cunliffe, “The Liberalization of Immigration Policy from 1945 to 1956: An Insider’s View,” 14.

¹⁰⁴ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 45, file 5, (I-2-428P) *Immigration Programme 1957*, “Most Confidential To: All Posts Abroad. From: A/Chief, Operations Division,” April 18, 1957.

¹⁰⁵ Pickersgill, *My Years With Louis St. Laurent*,” 145.

¹⁰⁶ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 45, file 5, (I-2-428P) *Immigration Programme 1957*, Fortier to Leger, May 22, 1957.

Integration for refugees, therefore, “is expected to be long and difficult.” In short, the dramatic increase in immigration numbers over previous years was raising significant political concerns, especially with an election campaign underway. As so often in the past, turning off the tap seemed the most prudent strategy. Nevertheless, in its final act concerning immigration policy, the government made one contrary decision, applicable to non-refugees; the quota established under Canada’s 1951 agreement with India was revised to increase the number of admissions from 150 per year to 300.¹⁰⁷

The long-term impact of the Hungarian initiative on immigration policy is difficult to precisely assess. Following the election, the new government immediately reduced immigrant admissions, and would continue to do so throughout its term in office. Had the Liberals been returned, however, it is reasonable to conclude that the lessons of the Hungarian experience would have been more impactful, notwithstanding the April decision to reduce the refugee intake. Canada’s 1957 intake of 282,164 immigrants (including more than 37,000 Hungarian refugees) was the highest since 1913.¹⁰⁸ It affirmed the economic analyses that had long argued that the nation’s absorptive capacity was greater than many believed, and demonstrated that significant numbers could be absorbed even in periods of declining economic growth or reduced employment. Overall, as one scholar noted, “the Hungarian movement might have created a breakthrough in Canadian immigration management from 1957 onwards, but the opportunity was allowed to slip away.”¹⁰⁹

The defeat of the Liberal government in 1957 astonished millions of Canadians. Among post-election analyses of the results, immigration policy received little attention. It had not been a major campaign issue. As we shall see, Diefenbaker did make extravagant campaign promises about the immigration policies his government would pursue, and these were carefully noted by his opponents. However, as with so much of Diefenbaker’s rhetoric, the Liberal government – to its eventual detriment – had long since ceased to take him seriously. “I could not help reflecting,” Pickersgill recollected, “how easy it was for the Opposition to take opposite positions on Immigration. While Diefenbaker talked about non-discrimination, Fulton and Churchill complained there was not enough discrimination in favour of British immigration.”¹¹⁰

A memorandum to the minister, dated June 10, 1957 and likely written by Fortier, recommended that the decisions implemented in April concerning the Hungarian refugee movement should be continued

¹⁰⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15877, April 25, 1957, “1951 immigration agreement with India; amendment to increase quota to 300,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1892.

¹⁰⁸ *Canada Year Book, 1959*, 179.

¹⁰⁹ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 117.

¹¹⁰ Pickersgill, *My Years with Louis St. Laurent: A Political Memoir*, 238.

for the remainder of the year. In fact, Fortier reported, intake from “all countries” should now be restricted:

There is a number of Hungarian refugees who really cause difficulties to officials of the Immigration Branch and National Health. Some refuse to leave hostels or centres, others refuse to accept employment, while others refuse to remain in hospital and accept treatment.”¹¹¹

Fortier recommended further restrictions, extending even to “close relative” placements, and the creation of a new ‘priority’ system of selection criteria. The concerns outlined in his memorandum suggested that perhaps the April decision to curtail the refugee movement was justified – at least politically. It also showed that the possibility of an electoral upset had not crossed the deputy minister’s mind.

A hand-written note in the margin of Fortier’s memo indicated the minister’s response: “As policy considerations are involved, I feel the decision should be left to my successor. JWP, 14.VI.57.”

¹¹¹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 45, file 5 (1-2-428P) “Immigration Programme 1957,” *Memorandum For The Minister*, June 10, 1957.

Chapter Seven

The Diefenbaker Years, 1957-1963:

Inspiring Vision and Lost Opportunity

Immigration was one issue on John Diefenbaker's mind as he launched his party's 1957 election campaign. In his opening speech at Toronto's Massey Hall, Diefenbaker pledged his government to "a vigorous immigration policy to bring to Canada immigrants with needed skills and resources." To do this, he continued, "We will revise the Immigration Act and Regulations. We will overhaul its administration to ensure that humanity will be considered and put an end to the bureaucratic interpretations which keep out from Canada many potentially good citizens."¹

As the campaign proceeded, the Conservative leader elaborated on his immigration vision. At Vancouver in May, he promised a more "expansive" policy while acknowledging that immigration "must be in numbers which can be absorbed economically without interfering with those who are in the country." Then came an additional detail. "Experience had shown," Diefenbaker announced, "that the maximum possible was about four per cent of the total population."² During another campaign appearance, Diefenbaker revealed the source of the "experience" to which he had alluded. The recent policies pursued by the government of Australia, he explained, had "produced the conclusion" that just under four percent of that country's total population could be absorbed each year through immigration. "Such a yardstick applied to Canada would establish a target of 640,000 immigrants in a year, or more than four times the number that came to Canada in 1956."³

Whether Diefenbaker had seriously considered this extraordinary suggestion, or intended to implement it, cannot be determined. There is no record of any comparative economic analysis demonstrating how the experience of another country might apply to Canada. Nor, it seems, had the idea of an annual immigration target equal to four percent of the country's population been subjected to serious study. But the promise of a "vast and humane" immigration policy resonated, and its inference – that Liberal policy had been neither – was unmistakable. The idea fit easily within the inspiring vision of

¹ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 102 *Diefenbaker, Rt. Hon. John. Promises 1957-1958*. "Promises made to the people of Canada in the 1957 General Election by the Hon. John G. Diefenbaker leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and (since June 21st, 1957) Prime Minister of Canada," 11.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ *Ibid.* See also "Preaches PC Victory on Tea and Cake Tour," *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, April 27, 1957, 2.

national development which Diefenbaker presented throughout the campaign.⁴ Whatever his pre-election intentions had been, however, Diefenbaker adopted a very different approach after taking office in June.

The task of forming a cabinet presented an immediate challenge for the new prime minister. “Looks to me as if I have to compose a cabinet of my enemies,” he confided to an astonished colleague.⁵ Apparently one such enemy was E. Davie Fulton, a long-time Parliamentary colleague who had recently contested the leadership of the Conservative party against him. (Diefenbaker won easily on the first ballot; Fulton finished a distant third.) Following an awkward negotiation during which he was offered – and declined – the role of Speaker, Fulton became minister of justice. He was also appointed the “acting” minister of citizenship and immigration.

No explanation appears to have been given for this curious acting designation. (In his memoirs, Diefenbaker suggested that he believed modern cabinets had grown too big.⁶) Was the suspicious prime minister punishing his ambitious young adversary, or simply ensuring that he would be too busy to pose any further threat? Whatever the rationale, Fulton’s “acting” status hardly signalled plans to forge ahead with the bold new policy which Diefenbaker had described during the campaign. When we recall the onerous administrative burdens which immigration placed directly upon the department’s minister, the appointment seems even more incomprehensible.

A July 26, 1957 press release announced the new government’s first policy decision on immigration. The Hungarian refugee movement had been reviewed, and the number of refugees accepted in Canada was now predicted to surpass 34,000 by August. The announcement pointed out that this number would exceed the 33,305 Hungarian refugees admitted by the United States. It also noted “the very heavy intake of immigrants through normal channels” early in the year. The “winter accommodation situation” in Canada presented an additional concern. Given these circumstances, “it has been decided to continue the refugee program on a somewhat modified basis for the balance of 1957.” Only those refugees sponsored by close relatives or by employers would be admitted. In other words, the restrictions imposed in April by the previous government would remain in effect for the remainder of the year. Further restrictions would be applied to non-refugee immigrants:

In order to keep the total ... within the absorptive capacity of our economy and the availability of housing accommodation, immigrants coming for open placement, i.e., those with no pre-arranged

⁴ Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 230.

⁵ Stursburg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained, 1956-62*, 70.

⁶ Diefenbaker, *One Canada, Vol. 2*, 34.

contract, in most occupations have been issued visas only for arrival in Canada before July 31st, 1957.⁷

The cabinet deliberation which preceded this announcement took place on July 9, some two weeks after the government took office. There Fulton explained that in 1956, a general optimism about economic and employment conditions had informed the Liberals' immigration strategy for 1957. The results, however, largely due to the Suez and Hungarian crises, were now raising concern. "Unless something were done to retard the movement of immigrants, it was estimated that the total for the year might exceed 300,000, which would be an all-time record."⁸ In his alarm over that prospect, the acting minister apparently comprehended neither the inaccuracy of this statement nor the irony in it. (Immigrant intake had indeed exceeded 300,000 in several years earlier in the century, and in the election campaign recently concluded, Diefenbaker had proposed even higher levels.) After a rambling discussion (during which cabinet ministers acknowledged that "the long-term interests of Canada resided in a higher rather than lower flow of immigrants") Fulton's proposal to curtail immigration for the remainder of 1957 was approved. The minutes of this cabinet meeting recorded no comment from the prime minister.⁹

The retreat from the campaign vision continued on July 25, when Fulton reported an inquiry from the *Toronto Star* that was causing obvious discomfort: What would be the government's policy on immigration from Ghana? (The former British colony had recently achieved independence within the Commonwealth.) Fulton's response, as he explained to his colleagues, had been equivocal:

The problem of immigration from there could not, of course, be looked at alone. It had to be looked at in conjunction with immigration from other prospective Commonwealth countries having coloured populations, such as Malaya, the British West Indies, etc. In reply to the query he had merely stated that the whole matter of Canadian immigration policy was now under review.¹⁰

The prime minister, recently returned from a Commonwealth first ministers' conference, now joined the discussion. While in London, Diefenbaker informed his cabinet, he had received assurances that the "coloured" members of the Commonwealth were unlikely to make an issue of Canadian policy so long as restrictions were made "on the grounds that these people could not be readily assimilated into the Canadian economy and way of life and not on the grounds that they were coloured people."¹¹ Diefenbaker offered no insight as to how such dissimulation could possibly be expected to satisfy

⁷ Queen's University Archives (QUA), Grant Dexter Papers, Series IV – Subject Files, Vol. 20, File 198, *Immigration. 1958 Legislation*, "Department of Citizenship and Immigration Press Release, No. 57-8," July 26, 1957.

⁸ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 16051, July 9, 1957, "Immigration; winter program 1957-58," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1893.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 16112, July 25, 1957, "Immigration policy; Ghana, Malaya, British West Indies etc." LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1893.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

“coloured” commonwealth members. Nor did he recall that before departing for the conference in June, he had planned “to assure the non-white peoples of the Commonwealth of reasonable advancement and equal opportunities.”¹² Only weeks removed from his June election victory, Diefenbaker’s “vast and humane” immigration strategy was rapidly dissipating, with no alternative policy under consideration.

The indirection continued through the autumn, culminating in December when Fulton raised in cabinet the issue of immigration policy for 1958. A “departmental advisory committee,” he reported, had reviewed the country’s “employment situation” for the coming year. Its deliberations now estimated a “receptive capacity” for between 180,000 and 200,000 immigrants in 1958. But there were other factors making the situation uncertain. For example, there was now a “strong possibility” of a reduced supply of immigrants from countries which Canada had traditionally favoured. Also, “reports of adverse economic conditions in Canada during the coming winter months” might discourage migration.

Notwithstanding these uncertainties, Fulton proposed a target number of between 175,000 and 180,000 for the year. He also recommended that the government continue to apply the selection criteria utilized by the previous government in 1956. Sensing hesitancy around the cabinet table, Fulton emphasized that a decision was needed: “Immigration officers overseas had been waiting for instructions for over two months. In order to make their plans for the coming year, [t]ravel companies would also wish to know about the programme as soon as possible.” Despite Fulton’s urging, the cabinet dithered. Perhaps there were compelling arguments in favour of high intake levels, but would it not be “wise to consider the effect on the Canadian public” of announcing such a plan?¹³ The discussion teetered back and forth. Any decision *could* generate criticism; labour might complain of immigrants taking jobs from Canadians, whereas any move to curtail intake could be seen as a lack of confidence in the economy. Under the circumstances, was there really “a necessity for any declaration at all?” Why not postpone any decision “until, say, the month of April, when more would be known about the economic situation and plans could be made for the balance of the year?”¹⁴

That was exactly what the government decided to do. There would be no decision on immigration targets, and certainly no policy announcement, until the following year. Departmental records from the winter of 1957-8 reflect the indecision of the period and the resulting lack of direction for Immigration Branch staff. One memorandum endeavoured to summarize “Activities and

¹² Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 15987, June 22, 1957, “Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1892. Diefenbaker’s biographer explains his ‘imprecise’ strategy for the conference; see Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 247.

¹³ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 16665, December 21, 1957, “Immigration policy, 1958,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1893.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Achievements” in immigration since June 1957. The list was short; a review of policies and procedures was underway, examining such items as “security screening, medical policy ... and Chinese immigration.” A parliamentary sub-committee had also been struck, but it had ceased operations with the dissolution of Parliament in January and “did not reconvene following the election of March 31, 1958.”¹⁵ A January 1958 Immigration Branch bulletin attempted to provide guidance to immigration officers on selection criteria but it, too, revealed the extent of the directional confusion:

Although indications are that the Canadian economy on the whole will continue in a healthy state during 1958, there will be greater than usual competition for jobs in the spring as a result of this winter’s large number of unemployed. It is, therefore, impossible to estimate with any certain degree of accuracy the number of immigrant workers that can be absorbed this year.¹⁶

Another memorandum informed staff that “Immigration regulations, policies and procedures are now being reviewed,” adding (somewhat superfluously) that “until a final decision has been reached it will be necessary to review each case ... in accordance with present practice.”¹⁷

Immigration was not the only policy area in which the Conservative government began hesitantly. Admittedly, several early decisions – implemented administratively – had created an appearance of dynamic action. There were increases to old age and veterans’ pensions, and developmental grants to the Maritime provinces, and for agriculture.¹⁸ Legislatively, however, there was inertia, and close observers could discern no overall agenda. Grant Dexter, now returned to Ottawa as the *Free Press*’ Parliamentary correspondent, confided to his editor in October 1957 that he found “no clear thinking in the government; no co-ordination. The conflicts in policy continue without the ministers seeming to be aware of them.” Especially troubling for Dexter was the absence of any legislative program to implement the financial promises made during the campaign: “Not one bill has been drafted.”¹⁹

The policy vacuum continued into the new year. Then, on January 20, 1958 the Liberal opposition moved an amendment to a routine parliamentary supply motion. A simple motion of non-confidence would have surprised no one, and would almost certainly have been defeated with CCF

¹⁵ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records, RG 26 Vol. 75, File 1-1-1 Part 1, “Activities and Achievements in Immigration Since June, 1957” (Undated).

¹⁶ LAC Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, vol. 940, *Circulars (Unnumbered) Series A – 1958, Binder #26, part 1*, “Subject: Selection of Immigrants within 20(a) and (b) of the Regulations for spring and summer movement 1958”, January 15, 1958.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, “Subject: Effect of Impending Review of Immigration Policy on Immigration Procedures,” February 27, 1958.

¹⁸ Several cabinet members later recalled the period as one of historic productivity: see Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained 1956-62*, 77-9.

¹⁹ Queen’s University Archives (QUA), Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 7, File 46, *Correspondence General 1957*, Dexter to Tom Kent, October 9, 1957.

support for the government. Instead, opposition leader Lester Pearson made an audacious proposal. An election, Pearson declared, would not be in the national interest; the economy was in decline, unemployment was increasing, and the government's record in addressing these problems was dismal. Rather than permit a non-confidence vote, Pearson announced, the government should simply resign, permitting the Liberals to return to government.²⁰

The Liberal motion (which had been authored by Pickersgill) was both arrogant and naïve. Diefenbaker immediately recognized the opportunity it presented, castigating the Liberals in a withering two-hour speech. Ten days later, even though Pearson's motion had been defeated and his government had not fallen, Diefenbaker secured a dissolution of Parliament. The ensuing election returned the Conservative government with 208 seats and the largest parliamentary majority in Canadian history.

Diefenbaker made few changes to his cabinet following his landslide victory, but on May 12, 1958 he appointed a permanent minister of citizenship and immigration. Hamilton MP Ellen Fairclough had entered cabinet a year earlier, when Diefenbaker fulfilled a 1957 campaign promise to appoint Canada's first female cabinet minister. The offer of the secretary of state portfolio had disappointed Fairclough, and she nearly declined it. Now, the appointment as immigration minister seemed equally unwelcome. "There is not a bit of doubt in my mind," she later recalled, "that it is the worst post in government."²¹ Like Fulton, Ellen Fairclough undoubtedly wondered why she was being punished.

Despite its overwhelming Parliamentary majority, the government's approach to immigration remained indifferent, showing no inclination to revive Diefenbaker's 1957 campaign vision. On May 22, 1958, with the year nearly half over, cabinet finally resumed its deliberations on immigration policy. Mysteriously, it was Fulton (now designated as the "former" acting minister) and not the new minister, who led the discussion. Fulton reported that in "the absence of any formal immigration programme" the focus early in the year had been on recruiting immigrants "who were likely to have little or no difficulty in establishing themselves." Accordingly, selection criteria were limited to "a very restricted list of occupations" (although officers had later been "authorized to select within a broader range"). As a result, immigrant arrivals during January-March totalled 20,000, as compared with more than 62,000 during the corresponding period in 1957. Fulton explained, however, that the Departmental Committee on Immigration had studied the country's labour requirements and was now recommending "a more positive programme" and a "somewhat larger movement." He recommended a target of 150,000 for 1958.

²⁰ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1958: IV, 3514-20.

²¹ Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained 1956-62*, 70-1.

As in the previous December, the cabinet agonized over Fulton's proposal. In light of concerns about the economy, perhaps prospective immigrants should be warned about "employment and housing conditions" in Canada. There had been a decrease in open applications and an increase in sponsored entries. No explanation for this development was offered, but ministers wondered whether it too was reason for concern. Finally, any target number "might be set too high and lead to adverse criticism." The cabinet eventually approved Fulton's proposal after being assured that target numbers were never disclosed to the public. The approval stipulated that the target of 150,000 must be an absolute maximum, and that immigration officials must be instructed to inform all prospective immigrants "of current employment and housing conditions in Canada."²² With such qualified endorsement, it was hardly surprising that immigration for the year would not reach the target, dropping to less than 125,000. The decline would continue throughout the Conservative government's time in office.

Ellen Fairclough's tenure as minister of citizenship and immigration only confirmed her initial ambivalence to the portfolio. Her memoirs describe few achievements and much frustration with "a high-profile department that gave me my share of headaches."²³ The Citizenship, and Indian Affairs branches brought some satisfaction, as did the agencies under the department's oversight, including the National Film Board, the National Gallery, and the Public Archives. But the department's major responsibility – immigration – caused nearly unrelenting misery for Ellen Fairclough. Unsupportive colleagues and a meddling prime minister certainly did not help, and her relationship with deputy minister Laval Fortier was difficult from the outset. The major problem, however, "was the lack of a good firm policy. I tried for months after assuming the portfolio to get the cabinet to consider my suggestions for reform, but I was brushed off – so many other things were considered more important."²⁴

By mid-1958 the immigration program was adrift in indecision. Cabinet minutes from that period show even routine administrative matters being deferred or decided ambiguously.²⁵ As a result, in the early months of her tenure the minister was forced to focus her attention on improving administrative efficiency in her department. In one early memorandum, Fairclough pronounced herself "gravely concerned over the lack of co-ordination between the various Divisions of the Department."²⁶ She

²² Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 17075, May 22, 1958, "Immigration; 1958 programme," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 1898.

²³ Fairclough, *Saturday's Child*, 109.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

²⁵ For example, see: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 17268, July 14, 1958, "Maintenance of immigration office in Tel Aviv, Israel" LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1898, and Item No. 17406, August 16, 1958, "Immigration; open placement for 1959," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1899.

²⁶ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records, RG 26, Vol 75, *File 1-1-1, Part 2*, "Memorandum to the Deputy Minister" (undated).

instructed the deputy minister to meet with “those concerned” in order to improve communication among divisions and with the Department’s information division. Even these endeavours yielded only modest results. One initiative sought to consolidate the immigration program’s myriad administrative policies and procedures. Staff were notified that a new “Administration Manual” would serve as the “official reference book of Headquarters’ instructions,” eventually supplanting all “Official Circulars and Headquarters Directives.”²⁷ In the ensuing years, however, administrative and procedural bulletins continued to flow unremittingly, suggesting that the goal of a consolidated manual of procedures remained elusive.

Indecision at the political level soon demoralized the bureaucracy. The Department’s Advisory Committee on Immigration, chaired by Fortier, met in September 1958 to consider policy for 1959. Its minutes revealed clearly the extent of the discouragement. The committee acknowledged that interest among prospective immigrants overseas was declining, but made its view clear that Canadian policy was also to blame:

This country’s cutback in immigration had unfortunately created the impression abroad that Canada was no longer interested in receiving immigrants. The chairman [i.e. Fortier] hoped that following the meeting the Cabinet would give consideration to an immigration programme and it would be possible to give instructions to overseas staff which would bring about a spirit of optimism. There was little doubt that the current restrictions were causing immigration officers in foreign countries to be much less optimistic and consequently less effective in persuading suitable and desirable immigrants to come to Canada.²⁸

For civil servants to deliver such undisguised criticism was astonishing. There was no mistaking the deputy minister’s blunt assessment that the government’s failure to provide policy direction had demoralized the department. “It is true,” Fortier acknowledged, “there were difficulties to be faced, but Canada still needs immigrants.” Former immigration director Charles Smith, now an assistant deputy minister, concluded the meeting with a final plea for a more vigorous recruitment policy. Describing the country’s employment prospects for the upcoming year as “fair,” Smith reported that “in all districts ... the number of opportunities developed exceeded the number of immigrants available for placement.”²⁹

²⁷ LAC Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, Vol. 941, *H.Q. Directives Series C – 1953-57, Binder #30*, “Immigration Branch Directive #9 (Re-issued); Subject: Manual of Administrative Instructions For The Guidance of Immigration Officers: Purpose and Scope of the Manual.”

²⁸ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records, RG 26 Vol 101, *File 3-18-6, part 2*, “Minutes of the seventy-first meeting of the Departmental Advisory Committee on Immigration held September 24, 1958.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*

A month earlier, in August, the minister had urged her cabinet colleagues to make a decision for the following year. Her efforts, like those of her officials, had little impact; the cabinet gave no further consideration to immigration in 1958.

By early 1959 the government's mishandling of immigration policy deteriorated from bad to worse. Once again, Fairclough's officials reported that there was reason for optimism: "The capacity of the Canadian economy to absorb immigrants should improve in 1959."³⁰ Such information might have been persuasive in securing cabinet approval for a more expansive policy. Incredibly, however, the minister's presentation to cabinet in February focused elsewhere. She acknowledged that there were opportunities for employment, especially in certain occupations and areas, but the influx of immigrants under the *Immigration Act's* sponsorship rules was now causing alarm. 'Sponsored' immigrants, Fairclough explained, "were admitted primarily because of their relationship to [their] sponsors rather than their potential immediate economic contribution to the country."³¹ Italians in particular were taking advantage of these rules, which resulted in large numbers "arriving without skills of any kind."³² The real 'problem', of course, was not the sponsorship rules but the fact that immigration from Italy in 1958 had exceeded that from the British Isles, and the government feared a public outcry.³³

To specifically reduce the influx of Italian immigrants, the minister recommended a regulatory amendment to remove the siblings and married children of Canadian residents from the category of immigrants eligible to be sponsored by close relatives. Cabinet agreed to the proposal, its approval revealing the true motivation behind the decision:

That, in order to increase the quality of the immigration movement in 1959, Regulation 20 (c) under the Immigration Act, be amended by deleting brothers and sisters and married sons and daughters from the admissible classes of close relatives.³⁴

When news of the amendment became public in March a political firestorm erupted, as the opposition Liberals, the press, and Canada's Italian community reacted with predictable outrage. Government attempts to deny any discriminatory intent only exacerbated the problem, and in late April,

³⁰ LAC Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, Vol. 940, *Binder #26, part 2*, "Subject: Immigration Programme 1959 – Un-sponsored Immigrants."

³¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18010, February 12, 1959, "Immigration programme 1959," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2744.

³² Fairclough, *Saturday's Child*, 115.

³³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1959: II, 1467. Presenting her department's annual estimates, Fairclough reported Italian immigration in 1958 at 28,564 and British immigration at 26,662 (Table 1). This was also the first year in which British immigrants were not the largest immigrant group.

³⁴ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18010, February 12, 1959, "Immigration programme 1959," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2744. Order in Council 1959-310 was issued on March 19, 1959.

after agonizing over the matter in cabinet, the government rescinded the regulation.³⁵ The episode was especially humiliating for Ellen Fairclough, whose Hamilton constituency included a substantial Italian population.

In its rush to address the “problem” of Italian immigration, the government had also ignored reports of improving economic prospects. For 1959, cabinet resolved only that intake should be “related to absorptive capacity without precise definition in terms of overall numbers.”³⁶ Once again, the possibility of a more expansive policy, or one based on a specific immigration target, was rejected. Later in the year, however, the government was presented with yet another opportunity to pursue the “vast and humane” immigration policy which Diefenbaker had promised in 1957. Nearly fourteen years after World War Two, more than 100,000 refugees and displaced persons still resided in European refugee camps. In an effort to finally resolve this continuing tragedy, in late 1958 the United Nations designated the twelve-month period beginning June 1, 1959 to be World Refugee Year, and requested the assistance of its member nations. Canada’s UN delegation supported the resolution and it appeared that – as so often in the past – international responsibilities might bring change to Canadian immigration policy.

More than six months after the announcement of the initiative by the UN, and despite considerable urging by the opposition in Parliament,³⁷ the government had reached no decision as to what Canada’s contribution would be. An inter-ministerial committee examined the various options, including a special financial contribution to UNHCR, but otherwise produced no specific recommendation. Existing “immigration regulations did not allow for the entry of people with such infirmities [i.e. tuberculosis] and immigration authorities had rejected all attempts to liberalize them.”³⁸ The minister herself remained unreceptive to requests to consider offering admission to tubercular refugees, including a direct plea from her colleague Sidney Smith, the external affairs minister.³⁹

³⁵ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1959: III, 2939. As usual, the cabinet discussion leading to rescission was not unanimous; some ministers insisted against any public promise to “remove discrimination entirely” from the Act, for fear of “antagonizing ... those who had consistently supported the Conservative Party in the past”: Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18283, April 20, 1959, “Changes in Immigration Regulations,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2744.

³⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18010, February 12, 1959, “Immigration programme 1959,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2744.

³⁷ See Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1959: II, 1629-47.

³⁸ Dirks, *Canada’s Refugee Policy*, 221.

³⁹ “I have considered the matter very carefully,” Fairclough wrote to Smith, and in her view, Canada had “done her share in accepting some 38,000 Hungarian refugees” the previous year; Fairclough to Smith, December 11, 1958 (quoted in Dirks, 222).

On June 12, 1959, with World Refugee Year already officially underway, Fairclough advised her cabinet colleagues that “something tangible” would be expected by way of a contribution from Canada.⁴⁰ Still, nothing happened. Finally, on September 11 Howard Green (recently appointed external affairs minister following Smith’s death) raised the matter once again in cabinet. This time, Green outlined a proposal for “the admission of about 100 tuberculosis refugees with their families.” Treatment would, of course, be provided in provincial sanatoria, and it was expected that contributions from the provinces and charitable organizations would help defray costs. Green estimated the maximum cost to the federal government at \$750,000 for the first year, and substantially less thereafter. Cabinet approved Green’s proposal, “on the understanding that the provincial governments and [charitable organizations] would be encouraged to contribute as much as possible and that the total cost to the Federal government during the first year should not exceed \$600,000.”⁴¹ The government’s muddled response to the entire issue continued into November, when Ellen Fairclough complained that Treasury Board had failed to provide the agreed-upon funding, and had suggested that her ministry should re-allocate the \$600,000 “from funds already authorized.”⁴²

When the plan was implemented in early 1960, its costs proved only a fraction of what had been estimated, and the government responded by announcing two further movements of tubercular refugees and their families, in July and December 1960. In the end, the program brought some 325 refugees and more than 500 family members to Canada, but the government’s fumbling approach virtually ensured that any potential goodwill would be reduced. As one opposition MP observed, the offer to accept 100 tubercular patients was made “at a time when 2,700 beds in tuberculosis sanatoria in Canada are empty.”⁴³ Cabinet ministers Howard Green and Ellen Fairclough could muster only weak explanations when confronted with opposition and press complaints about Canada’s meagre response to the initiative. Canada, Green protested, had already accepted several thousand “other” refugees in 1959-60, and the government had anticipated greater support from “churches and other organizations of a similar nature” than had materialized.⁴⁴ Fairclough in particular managed to enrage Ontario premier Leslie Frost with comments suggesting that a lack of provincial support had prevented the federal government from doing more. “I don’t know what Mrs. Fairclough is talking about,” Frost exploded. The prime minister had

⁴⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18510, June 12, 1959, “World refugee year,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2745.

⁴¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 18817, September 11, 1959, “Special contribution to the World Refugee Year,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2745.

⁴² Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 19085, November 20, 1959, “Estimates for the World Refugee Year Program,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2745. (Cabinet mediated the interdepartmental spat, ordering Treasury Board to release the funds by way of a supplemental allotment to the Department of External Affairs.)

⁴³ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1960: I, 1122.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1137.

requested his government's support for the initiative and it was given: "If the federal government feels we should do more I wish they'd tell us."⁴⁵

Frustration was beginning to wear on Ellen Fairclough as the Diefenbaker government approached the mid-way point of its mandate having articulated no clear policy on immigration. In January 1960, she informed her colleagues that she had prepared "recommendations" for amendments to the *Immigration Act*, which meant the Act could be revised during the upcoming session. As usual, however, there were multiple concerns. The whole subject of immigration was "inherently contentious" and a new bill would undoubtedly "unleash a storm of controversy both from those wishing for more and those wanting less immigration." Moreover, she acknowledged, "there was not complete unanimity" among the various government departments as to what revisions were needed. Security procedures would also come under scrutiny, which would cause particular discomfort given the program's longstanding practice of not disclosing reasons for denying entry or deportation.⁴⁶

To avoid these potential headaches (and perhaps ease the pressure she was feeling) Fairclough suggested an alternate approach. A royal commission should be appointed, with a wide-ranging mandate to examine the "principles" of immigration policy, its administration, and appropriate legislative and regulatory revisions. A royal commission would of course require several years to fulfil such a broad mandate; the government would therefore be relieved of its commitment to take legislative action until sometime after the next election. A cabinet committee was struck to examine Fairclough's recommendation. Its composition virtually ensured the fate of the proposal; members included Fulton and Green, along with Ellen Fairclough. Two weeks later, Fairclough returned to cabinet with a report on the committee's deliberations. A majority of members had supported the idea, but justice minister (and former immigration minister) Davie Fulton had not. Fulton's objections were two-fold. First, the determination of immigration policy was primarily "a political or executive decision" and not something that should be determined by royal commission. Secondly, Fulton pointed out, most of the department's problems arose not from "general policy" matters but from "procedural questions, particularly the security procedure." Fulton well understood that exposing security procedures to public scrutiny would subject both the department and the RCMP to sensational questions which they would not want to answer "because of security considerations."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ "More TB Refugees? Ellen, Frost Clash," *Toronto Star*, December 19, 1959, 1-2.

⁴⁶ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 19254, January 6, 1960, "Proposed Royal Commission on Immigration," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2746.

⁴⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 19337, January 20, 1960, "Royal Commission on Immigration," LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2746.

In the end, Fulton's arguments prevailed, and the cabinet wisely rejected the proposal of a royal commission. For Ellen Fairclough this meant resuming the challenge of defending ineffectual policy against widespread criticism. From the opposition front bench Jack Pickersgill led the parliamentary attack as immigration critic. Pickersgill continually reminded the government of Diefenbaker's extravagant campaign promises in 1957⁴⁸, all of which he had catalogued in a volume distributed to Liberal MPs and "anyone else who was interested."⁴⁹ Immigration, Pickersgill recalled, was one area about which "I was always vigilant."⁵⁰ He led the attack on the 1959 regulation designed to curtail Italian immigration, and regularly taunted the government over its failure to deliver on promised legislative and policy changes.⁵¹ Pickersgill's penchant for colourful comments usually ensured favourable press coverage for the opposition (but not, of course, for the government).⁵²

In March 1960, a new source of aggravation emerged when the Senate announced plans to resuscitate its Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour. The committee had been moribund since 1953; now, Winnipeg senator William M. Wall proposed that it be reconstituted with a mandate to examine the activities of the Department. Frustrated by the government's failure to act, or even articulate a policy, Wall pointed in particular to the Gordon Commission's conclusion in 1957 that "the economic advantages of continued immigration are substantial enough to justify ... a stable immigration policy even through periods of mild recession."⁵³

A detailed memorandum was needed to enlighten the minister on the Senate committee's former activities and broad mandate.⁵⁴ "Senator Wall now proposes that the committee be authorized ... to review the operation of the Immigration Branch, Citizenship Branch and the Registration Branch." Even worse (as Department of Labour officials informed their deputy minister), "If this motion is passed by the Senate it would appear that senior officials of the department will be called before the committee as witnesses." Assessing the Senate plan to reconvene the committee, Labour officials apprehended that the government would face criticism over issues both old and new:

⁴⁸ For example, see LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG32 B34, Vol 102 (untitled press clippings file), "New Immigration Controls Tory Policy – Pickersgill," *Toronto Daily Star*, August 9, 1957. Also: Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1957-8: I, 97-100.

⁴⁹ Pickersgill, *Seeing Canada Whole*, 499. A copy of this volume is found in LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG32 B34, Vol 102, *Diefenbaker, Rt. Hon. John. Promises 1957-57*, "Re: Diefenbaker's Promises in the 1957 General Election."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 529.

⁵¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1960: II, 2127.

⁵² See, for example, "The Tories Need a Tonic," *Saturday Night* 74, no. 14, August 15, 1959, 16-7; 43.

⁵³ Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, 1960: 388-9.

⁵⁴ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG26, Vol. 101, File 3-18-2, vol. 2 (1960), *The Senate – Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour*, "Confidential – Memorandum to the Minister," March 8, 1960. (A discussion of the committee's earlier postwar activities appears in Chapter 3 above, pages 50-6.)

Senator Wall ... is particularly concerned about the drop in the Immigration movement in 1958 and 1959 as compared to 1957. He took strong exception to the fact that the drop in movement was mentioned in the annual report of the Immigration Branch by one sentence which referred to diverse factors and adverse publicity abroad. ... He also took exception to the arbitrary powers of Special Inquiry Officers, the regulatory power of the Governor-in-Council under Section 61 of the Act and he stressed the fact that no significant changes had been made in the Immigration Act regulations since the government came to power in 1957.⁵⁵

The prospect of investigation by the Senate provoked a defensive response from Fairclough's department. A lengthy memorandum, prepared for the deputy minister by immigration branch officials, replied to the "main points" now being raised by the Senate. To begin with, there were the direct criticisms:

- (1) A vigorous policy of higher immigration is a necessity
- (2) Why is policy not clear?
- (3) Why is policy not consistent?

These points, the memorandum explained, required "political" answers. "Until the government enunciates a policy, civil servants can speak only in vague generalities, still based on Mackenzie King's statement of policy in 1947."⁵⁶ An additional complaint, that no legislative amendments had been made, was of course "true except for minor changes," and there could be no response from the civil service on the issue until such time as amending legislation was introduced. As for the recent decline in immigration, an explanation was readily available if the government was prepared to acknowledge its own responsibility for the problem:

It can be shown that after the restriction ... which was ordered early in 1957, immigration fell off drastically and it has not been possible to reverse the decrease. It will be necessary to explain what the Department has done in an attempt to get immigrants. Dealing with this point may require us to produce material from our files to prove our case; however if this takes place it may be very difficult to refuse to produce other documents.⁵⁷

The memorandum continued, noting additional concerns the Senate might raise, such as the "arbitrary" powers granted by the Act to immigration officers and to the cabinet. Any of those could be changed or removed by Parliament, but until such time as the government chose to act "it is our responsibility to administer the legislation as it is written." In addition, the Senate might search for "discrepancies between our Regulations and administrative practices," and the potential for embarrassment in this area was substantial:

⁵⁵ Ibid., "For Chief, Immigration Services," March 28, 1960.

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Subject: Proposed Review of immigration by the Senate," March 28, 1960, 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

One instance ... is the control of immigration from a country by the size of staff allocated, such as in Italy or Greece.

It must be admitted ... that we could put into Italy sufficient staff to clear up the backlog there if we were willing to do so and it may be necessary to explain why we are not prepared to increase Italian immigration. Once again, this necessitates policy guidance.⁵⁸

In both tone and content, this was another extraordinary briefing document, and it is unimaginable that the previous government would have been subjected to such blunt 'advice' from its bureaucracy. The memorandum seemed to alternate between reprimanding the government for its indecision on policy, and lecturing them on their legislative responsibilities. Clearly, immigration officials were distancing themselves from the Diefenbaker government while, at the same time, defending their program's long-entrenched policies, procedures, and rules. They were not, however, focused on presenting their best policy options, or preparing their minister for the questions she might encounter, as they had invariably done for previous ministers. It was little wonder that Ellen Fairclough did not feel well supported, or that Laval Fortier was removed as deputy minister the following month.⁵⁹ His successor, personally selected by the minister, was former deputy minister of health and welfare Dr. George Davidson.⁶⁰

Ellen Fairclough persevered in her efforts to manage her department and to fulfil the government's various immigration commitments. One way to identify possible administrative improvements would be a visit to the department's overseas offices. Such a trip had been planned in 1958 and 1959, and cancelled both times. Fairclough rescheduled the excursion once again for the fall of 1960, and once again the prime minister intervened. Diefenbaker, she recalled, "now felt the time was inopportune because of the imminence of cabinet changes." Instead, he ordered Fairclough to "go across the country and speak wherever I could," undoubtedly hoping that her popularity might bolster the declining popularity of his government.⁶¹ The opportunity to visit her department's overseas offices would never return, and the minister was understandably left feeling "at a distinct disadvantage administratively."⁶²

Fairclough undertook her public speaking assignments energetically, but the role of apologist for a government that had fulfilled few of its immigration commitments must have chafed. The texts of many of her speeches from this period survive. They are replete with the familiar concepts and terminology that

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3. (On May 25, 1960 Wall withdrew his motion to reconstitute the Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour, perhaps offering slight relief to Ellen Fairclough; Canada, *Debates of the Senate*, 1960: 670-2.)

⁵⁹ On April 26, 1960 Fortier was appointed Chief Commissioner of the federal Unemployment Insurance Commission; LAC Immigration Branch Records RG76, Vol. 75, *File 1-1-1 Part 2*, "Order-in-Council P.C. 1960-552".

⁶⁰ Ibid., "Order-in-Council P.C. 1960-556".

⁶¹ Fairclough, *Saturday's Child*, 116.

⁶² Ibid.

previous (Liberal) governments had always invoked to describe – and justify – immigration policy. Absent new initiatives or ideas, her only recourse was to remind audiences of the importance of the concept of ‘absorptive capacity’, and the need for ‘flexibility’ to adapt to changing economic conditions and “avoid dislocation.”⁶³ Invariably there were happy examples of penniless immigrants who had ‘made good.’ In one presentation that must have mystified her Jewish audience, Fairclough rhapsodized about Canada’s postwar efforts to “gladly welcome newcomers to our shores [and] integrate them into our community.”⁶⁴ Other speeches placed greater emphasis on Canada’s recent record with refugee admissions, and on refuting criticism in that area. Fairclough often reminded her audiences that government’s role “is to give a lead”; there were “other avenues ... open to private individuals and organizations who justly feel that they have a duty to help these unfortunate people.”⁶⁵

The government, the minister now seemed to be arguing, had done more than its share in offering sanctuary to refugees, and it was time for others to contribute more. Of all the immigrants admitted since the war, “probably not less than 300,000” could be categorized as refugees. “In absolute figures, no other country ... with the one exception of the United States, has taken more refugees than Canada.”⁶⁶ Such observations were literally true (although they mostly applied to the period before her government came into office) but they could hardly have brought fulfilment to a minister of Ellen Fairclough’s ability who had intended to do much more.

Fairclough did not abandon her efforts to persuade her colleagues to support a more focused immigration policy, but those efforts yielded little fruit. In a detailed presentation to cabinet in April 1960, she began with a summary of the concerns and criticisms that were compounding as the government continued to waffle. The Conservatives had promised a policy of national development and new immigration legislation, but immigration policy was still operating under principles enunciated by Mackenzie King in 1947. After thirteen years, continued reliance on the policies of previous administrations “was becoming a weak defence.” The backlog in unprocessed sponsored applications was also growing at an alarming rate. This made it difficult to deal with open-placement applicants, and

⁶³ See LAC Ellen Fairclough Records R-12805 File I-29, *Speeches – Part I, 1957-1961*. “Notes For An Address by the Hon. Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Before The Fifteenth Anniversary Dinner Meeting Of The Toronto Chapter Of Internal Auditors,” (undated) 12-3; “Notes for Speech by the Hon. Ellen L. Fairclough to the Oshawa Rotary Club, January 5, 1959.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, “Notes For An Address By The Hon. Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Before The Annual Dinner Meeting Of The Jewish Immigrant Aid Services, May 14, 1959, Toronto.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, “Remarks by the Hon. Ellen L. Fairclough Minister of Citizenship and Immigration At The Opening Of A Conference Convened By The Canadian Welfare Council To Examine The Problems Connected With The Migration Of Refugees To Canada, Ottawa, January 28-29, 1960,” 2-3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Speech re. refugees: Partial Text Of An Address By The Honourable Ellen L. Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Before The Canadian Club of Sudbury.” (May 20, 1961).

it meant continuing to bring unskilled labour into the country instead of the “professional” and “skilled” people now needed to generate wealth and employment. Moreover, a new concern had now been identified; Canada’s increased postwar birthrate would mean a substantial increase in the number of young adults entering the workforce during the ensuing decade.⁶⁷

To address these diverse concerns, Fairclough argued, the only viable solution would be a plan “to force the rate of growth of the economy.” She pleaded for support for such a plan. Canada needed a substantial inflow of immigrants, and needed to establish a long-range immigration policy, based upon reasonably consistent annual targets. Experience had shown that an average rate of inflow of one percent of population was entirely realistic, and could be adjusted – slightly – upward or down to meet temporary conditions. The backlog in sponsored-immigrant applications needed to be resolved and avoided in future; a continued and unregulated influx of “Mediterranean” migrants could result in “a ‘little Italy’ complex.” Lastly, the minister sought approval to implement a program that would emphasize the selection of immigrants best suited to bring “economic benefit” to Canada.⁶⁸

In short, the minister was seeking support for both an immigration strategy and a “population plan.” However, the minutes of the cabinet’s discussion of her proposal once again revealed a government incapable of agreement or decisive action. There were so many things to worry about and whose impact might bring confusion or criticism. What about the thousands of young Canadians soon to enter the workforce? Would immigrants deprive them of job opportunities? What about farmers and agricultural workers, who would have to be absorbed into other occupations in future, especially if unemployment among laborers and unskilled workers remained high? It was all so bewildering. In the end, there were few specifics to the decision. The minister was authorized to proceed with a “substantial [but unspecified] flow of immigrants,” selected for their ability “to establish themselves in Canadian social, cultural, political and economic life.” It was clear that Ellen Fairclough would be on her own to interpret and implement these vague principles (and to absorb any blame if problems arose). Under the circumstances, it seems almost comical to note the cabinet’s conclusion that this muddled deliberation “should provide guidance to the minister and the basis for a statement when her estimates [come] up in the House.”⁶⁹

Immigration policy – such as it was – would remain unexamined for another eighteen months. In March, 1961, three full years into its majority mandate, the government took stock of its agenda for the

⁶⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 19647, April 12, 1960, “Immigration policy,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 2746, 5-6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

current session, particularly its legislative commitments which remained unfulfilled. One such outstanding commitment, of course, was a revised *Immigration Act*. A draft bill was under preparation, but the cabinet decided instead that the item “should be deleted from the legislative programme for the present Session.” To justify the decision, the government cited a convenient precedent. The previous Liberal government had announced plans to introduce a new Act in its 1951 throne speech, “but in fact had not done so until two sessions later.”⁷⁰

In October 1961, the minister made one final suggestion to break the policy impasse. A cabinet committee had approved revisions to the regulations under the *Immigration Act*. If the government was not prepared to proceed with a new Act, or amend the current one, perhaps regulatory amendments would suffice for the time being. (Subsequent passage of a new statute would, of course, require new regulations. Fairclough – perhaps preferring not to complicate the matter – avoided that detail.)

As always, there were potential problems. The proposed new regulation could address the longstanding criticism that Canadian law discriminated against prospective immigrants on the basis of nationality, race, and colour but this, in turn, might result in complaints that the selection criteria were now “anti-British.” Nevertheless, the minister now proposed to eliminate from the selection criteria “all reference to questions of nationality, geography or regions of the world,” replacing them with criteria based on “skills and qualifications.” The ensuing cabinet deliberation noted other worries. Additional immigration staff might be needed to administer the expanded selection criteria; the agreements with India, Ceylon, and Pakistan might have to be reviewed; and perhaps the new regulation should also revise the immigration appeals process, to ensure conformity with the provisions of the new Bill of Rights.⁷¹

Characteristically, the cabinet deferred its decision on this latest proposal, electing instead to refer the draft changes to the Department of Justice. Fifteen days later on November 2, with the issue still undecided, the prime minister reported to cabinet on questions he had answered at a press conference earlier that day. One question concerned immigration policy. In his response, Diefenbaker recounted, “he had said that the immigration laws were implemented mainly through the regulations, and that the government was going to amend these regulations.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 22306, March 30, 1961, “Status of the legislative programme – Cabinet Committee on immigration policy,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 6176.

⁷¹ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 23029, October 18, 1961, “Revision of Immigration Regulations,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 6177.

⁷² Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 23084, November 2, 1961, “Press Conference – Prime Minister’s Remarks on a National Flag – Immigration and Permanent Speaker in the House of Commons,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 6177.

This was not the first time that Diefenbaker had publicly announced a major policy decision without prior cabinet agreement, or without notifying his ministers. The minutes of the November 2 cabinet meeting recorded the startling news with bureaucratic restraint, indicating simply that cabinet “noted” the statements by the prime minister at his press conference.⁷³ On that same day, as Diefenbaker was informing cabinet that the government would proceed by way of regulatory revisions, the *Globe and Mail* was confidently advising its readership that a “final draft” of a new *Immigration Act* was nearing “full approval” in cabinet.⁷⁴

While it is possible that the *Globe and Mail* had simply reported incorrect information, the cabinet record suggests a different explanation for the chaotic decision-making process. On October 18, cabinet had deferred its decision on a new regulation, referring the matter to the Department of Justice. The minutes recorded no comment by the prime minister, and the subject was not discussed again until November 2 when Diefenbaker informed cabinet that he had announced a decision that morning. Any consultation or consensus that preceded Diefenbaker’s decision did not happen at the cabinet table. Moreover, as the *Globe and Mail* also noted, “there have been indications of sharp divisions of opinion” within the government about how best to proceed with any legislative revisions:

One suggestion is that [changes] could be limited mainly to putting the act in line with the Canadian Bill of Rights. Another is a liberalization of policies which in the main have limited immigration to people of European stock.⁷⁵

The *Globe* also noted another sudden announcement related to immigration policy. The prime minister had just returned from a five day visit to Japan. While there, he had “revealed a new attitude to Japanese immigrants,” announcing a “plan” to liberalize admission rules for managerial and technical employees of Japanese businesses operating in Canada.⁷⁶ Once again, there is no record of any previous discussion of this policy initiative in cabinet, or evidence that it might have originated within the immigration bureaucracy. Diefenbaker, apparently, had simply announced it to his Japanese hosts.

With her instructions at last having been clarified, Ellen Fairclough returned to cabinet on January 18, 1962 with a draft regulation approved by the Department of Justice. The government’s lawyers had modified the proposed wording somewhat. The November draft had “sought to establish equality of treatment of all categories of close relatives from all parts of the world.” It proposed not only more generous treatment toward traditionally non-preferred countries, but also “reducing to some extent

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Revised Immigration Act Awaits Cabinet Approval,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 1961, 25.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

the categories of close relatives ... admissible from the traditional sources in Europe.” The Department of Justice, however, restored provisions permitting the sponsorship of the close relatives of Canadian residents from traditionally favoured European countries. Although the revision appears to have been based upon political rather than legal considerations, it nevertheless represented astute advice; by ensuring that less favoured groups could be “moved forward” without simultaneously “withdrawing privileges from more favoured groups,” public criticism might be avoided.⁷⁷

After some discussion, the cabinet approved the proposed regulation and on the following day, January 19, 1962, Ellen Fairclough announced the changes in parliament. There were two parts to the new immigration regulation. The first implemented the changes outlined above, through new “visa requirements” and redefined “admissible classes.” The second part sought to extend the jurisdiction of appeal boards constituted under the *Immigration Act*, thereby ensuring that each tribunal would be “free to conduct its proceedings independently of departmental officials.”⁷⁸

The most important provision, the minister explained, was section 31 of the new regulation, which would now place “primary stress on education, training and skills as the main condition of admissibility regardless of the country of origin of the applicant.” In other words,

Any suitably qualified person from any part of the world can be considered for immigration to Canada entirely on his own merits without regard to his race, colour, national origin or the country from which he comes. This is a substantial advance over the former regulations in that the selection of immigrants, in so far as selection on the basis of skills is concerned will be done without discrimination of any kind.⁷⁹

In its actual language, the new regulation deviated significantly from its predecessor. It began by confirming the admissibility of persons with “education, training, skills or other special qualifications ... likely to be able to establish himself successfully in Canada,” together with their spouses and children.⁸⁰ Other ‘close relatives’ – parents, grandparents, and the unmarried children of Canadian residents, were also now broadly admissible.⁸¹ However, the Department of Justice’ revisions ensured that not all racial criteria were removed; the regulation’s final clause stipulated particular eligibility criteria for the close relatives of Canadian citizens or residents from European countries “including Turkey”, Central and

⁷⁷ Cabinet Conclusions, Item No. 20695, January 18, 1962, “Immigration regulations,” LAC RG 2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5a, Vol. 6192.

⁷⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1962: I, 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Canada Gazette Part II*, Vol. 96 (February 14, 1962) P.C. 1962-86, s. 31(a).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, s. 31(b).

South America, and from Egypt, Israel, or Lebanon.⁸² Finally, the new regulation did not negate the preferential, race-based categories still present in the governing statute – the 1953 *Immigration Act*.⁸³

Opposition reaction to the minister's announcement was swift and negative. Liberal immigration critic Jack Pickersgill, who seemed to have received advance notice of the revisions, spoke immediately after the minister. He quickly dismissed the claim that the regulatory changes would transform the immigration appeals board into an independent tribunal. The minister, Pickersgill declared, was well aware that under the *Immigration Act* "the final decision in all these cases is vested in the minister and cannot be transferred by order in council to anybody else." In other words, an amendment to the Act would be required in order to vest the appeals process in a tribunal that would function independently of the government. Turning to the revised admission criteria, Pickersgill's argument was less imaginative. The existing regulatory provisions, he declared, were already devoid of "racial or other similar discrimination." (This was not correct, and in any case selection historically had been carried out administratively, under broad discretionary regulatory language.) In abolishing the current "convenient general categories" for the selection of suitable immigrants, Pickersgill argued, the government was merely substituting "one set of criteria for discrimination for another." (This remark was accurate, since application of the new criteria would still be a matter of discretion.) Moreover, the new criteria would "make it necessary to look at every individual case and compare it with every other case" compounding the administrative burden on immigration officials.⁸⁴

This was not Pickersgill's most effective parliamentary performance. The notes prepared for his statement in the House revealed a more penetrating analysis of the revisions which, inexplicably, he did not include in his actual parliamentary remarks:

[I]t seems to me that the clear purpose of these Regulations is ... to make it easier for the Department to restrict rather than expand immigration. They have obviously been concerned about the increase in sponsored immigration and the increased number of applications, and if more attention is to be paid in future to these so-called criteria of education and skills that means that less attention will be paid to sponsored applications. Moreover it is going to be utterly impossible with the present staff or anything like the present staff to make any intelligent selection of immigrants on a personal basis. Indeed one is being substituted for the apparent criteria of skills and education but in fact the purely capricious opinion of each Immigration Officer overseas or in the United States.⁸⁵

⁸² *Ibid.*, s. 31(d).

⁸³ See above, Chapter 4, pages 91-2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸⁵ LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records, MG32-B34 Vol. 102, *Citizenship and Immigration. Estimates (pt. 2) 1958-1962*. "Memorandum re. Immigration Regulations" (undated), 2.

Pickersgill nevertheless made his point. He concluded his brief speech noting that five years had now passed since the prime minister's extravagant campaign pledge of a bold new immigration policy. Now, with only months remaining before another election, he reminded the government that its promise in 1957 had been "not to change the regulations but to change the act, and that has not been done."⁸⁶

The revised selection criteria set forth in P.C 1962-86 were the Diefenbaker government's legacy to Canadian immigration policy. Scholars have generally acknowledged the regulation's importance in removing discriminatory racial criteria from the selection process, but their analyses have at times been restrained. To Freda Hawkins, the regulation represented "the main effort and achievement of Mrs. Fairclough's ministry." Hawkins suggests that the changes evolved from a "more critical approach" and a "desire for change"⁸⁷ within the immigration department. She offers no particular evidence for this conclusion, however, and given the department's long history of resistance to change, the assessment seems exceedingly generous. Economist Alan Green concludes that the old selection policy based on race and national origin "had been swept away," but notes that application of the new skills and educational criteria was still conditional, "since it was based on the training of the applicant and the need in Canada for the particular immigrant's skill (a carry-over from the past)."⁸⁸ Valerie Knowles perceptively connects the new regulation to the Bill of Rights which the government proudly enacted in 1960: "Since the bill rejected discrimination by reason of race, colour, national origin, religion, or sex, the government could no longer justify selecting immigrants on the basis of race or national origin."⁸⁹ In contrast, other studies barely mentioned the 1962 revisions.⁹⁰ In her own memoirs, Ellen Fairclough mentioned them only briefly, modestly noting that they "at least marked the beginning of reform."⁹¹ None of these analyses recognize any connection between the 1962 regulation and earlier postwar revisions to immigrant selection criteria which sought to replace racialized categories with those emphasizing "occupational" qualifications.⁹² Nor do they acknowledge the adjustments to some racial restrictions that had been implemented administratively (and without corresponding regulatory revisions) during the final St. Laurent years.⁹³

⁸⁶ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1962: I, 11.

⁸⁷ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 127-8.

⁸⁸ Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 36.

⁸⁹ Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 188.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 350, which discusses only the attempt to enhance the independence of immigration appeal tribunals under the Act.

⁹¹ Fairclough, *Saturday's Child*, 119.

⁹² See above, Chapter 5, pages 101-4.

⁹³ See above, Chapter 6, pages 120-9.

The immediate impact of the changes was not dramatic, and their effect would not begin to appear until after the Diefenbaker government left office in 1963. By late 1963, however, immigration rates from previously non-preferred countries were increasing. In that year, arrivals from Hong Kong rose to 1,008, from 426 in 1962. From India, 737 newcomers arrived, an increase of 200 over the previous year; 1964 would see a further increase, to 2,400. Arrivals from the West Indies also increased, to 2,227 in 1963 from 1,480 in 1962.⁹⁴ Overall, immigration continued to decline throughout the Diefenbaker period, to 71,689 arrivals in 1961 and 74,586 in 1962. The year 1963 saw a slight increase to 93,151.⁹⁵ The fact that immigration from Britain comprised most of the increase in 1963⁹⁶ suggested that even though the government had revised the admission criteria, its actual immigration policy had not substantially changed.

Although opponents dismissed the 1962 regulation as too little and too late, it nevertheless marked an important milestone, establishing non-racial criteria that would form the basis of later legislative and regulatory selection regimes. The question remains, however, why the Diefenbaker government did not follow through on its early promises of legislative reform and a liberalization of the nation's immigration policy? Surely the overwhelming mandate of early 1958 represented – at least briefly – an endorsement of the campaign vision Diefenbaker articulated for immigration. Why, then, were the regulatory revisions of 1962 not implemented sooner, and accompanied by broader legislative change? Economic, political, and personal factors all offered plausible explanations, and indeed each seems to have contributed to the prolonged inaction. As we have seen, early in its mandate the government became concerned with a reduced rate of economic growth and increasing unemployment, and those concerns were exacerbated (in their view) by the exceptionally high immigrant influx of 1956-7. Fearing public outcry over competition with newcomers for available jobs, they reacted in the traditional manner – by turning off the immigration ‘tap.’

The world views of the government's influential ministers, and of the prime minister himself, comprised another key factor. Davie Fulton showed no inclination toward reform during his year as acting immigration minister, and his parliamentary record on immigration issues while in opposition had clearly demonstrated other priorities.⁹⁷ As one recent study has shown, prominent Conservatives like Fulton and Gordon Churchill had long been engaged in “a ... battle to bolster Canada's British identity against the onslaught of communists, wayward immigrants, and a Liberal party willing to placate

⁹⁴ *Canada Year Book, 1965*, 209, and *Canada Year Book, 1966*, 223.

⁹⁵ *Canada Year Book, 1965*, 206.

⁹⁶ Immigration from the British Isles increased from 15,600 in 1962 to 24,600 in 1963.

⁹⁷ See above Chapter 3, pages 69-70, and Chapter 5, 100.

outsiders in return for votes.”⁹⁸ In addition, there were disparate components to John Diefenbaker’s idea of Canadian citizenship, including his devotion to Britain and the Commonwealth, and his vision of “One Canada” in which all groups united together as “un-hyphenated” citizens. These notions were not easily reconcilable to each other, or to Diefenbaker’s broader vision of Canada as a land of immigrants who “despite their ethnic and religious differences, were united because they were all citizens, subjects of the same monarch, and members of a diverse and unified Commonwealth.”⁹⁹ Despite Diefenbaker’s early optimism in 1957, such complicated principles could hardly be expected to offer a clear path to policy reform, and in the end they did not.

Thirdly, there were political concerns, similar to the fears about immigration that had worried all previous governments. Analysing the results of a recent Gallup Poll in October 1960, the *Montreal Star* reported that the “segment of the population objecting to increased immigration is considerably larger than it was in 1953, when the Gallup Poll measured points of view on the same basis as today.” Statistically, 67% of Canadians ‘disapproved’ of the idea of increased immigration in 1961, an increase over the 52% response to the same question in the 1953 survey.¹⁰⁰ The poll revealed an even clearer message from within “the ranks of labour, where almost three of four want no increased immigration.”

On April 19, 1962, three months after implementation of the new regulation, Parliament was dissolved, and the ensuing election reduced the Conservative government to another minority. Among the cabinet changes that followed the election was the appointment of Ottawa MP Richard A. Bell as minister of citizenship and immigration. Bell was known to be an enthusiastic supporter of immigration and a capable administrator. From his appointment on August 9, he undertook “to get things moving again in immigration and to develop a deliberately expansionist policy.”¹⁰¹ He appears to have enjoyed some success in restoring morale within his department, which he discovered to be extremely low in both domestic and overseas offices, and in convincing his officials that a more expansive policy would soon be implemented. However, given the magnitude of the problems to be overcome – from unclear policy direction to lack of support within parliament or from the prime minister – Bell’s time as minister was too short to effect any substantial change. There was no parliamentary discussion of his plans, or even a review of his department’s estimates (ordinarily the occasion for a thorough policy debate) prior to the

⁹⁸ Spittal, “The Diefenbaker Moment,” 292-3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 295-6.

¹⁰⁰ “Hold Immigration, Say Seven In Ten,” *Montreal Star*, October 10, 1960.

¹⁰¹ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 135.

government's collapse in February 1963. For this reason, Hawkins' description of Bell's tenure as a "resurrection" within the immigration program appears exceedingly generous.¹⁰²

By the time of the Diefenbaker government's disintegration and defeat, all opportunities to pursue the "vast and humane" immigration policy promised in 1957 had been squandered.

¹⁰² Ibid., 138. (Valerie Knowles offers a similarly complimentary appraisal; see Knowles, *Strangers At Our Gates*, 190-1.)

Conclusions

The introduction to this thesis posed several questions, each based upon the premise that some important aspects of Canada's postwar immigration policy had not previously been identified. Between 1945 and 1957, immigration to Canada reached historic levels, surpassed only by those of the early twentieth century, and included groups to whom admission had been denied under traditional selection criteria. The common characterization of postwar policy as a mixture of altruism and self-interest did not seem to comprehensively explain the demographic transformation that began after 1945, the complex influences on policy during that period, or the differing values and sensibilities among politicians, policy-makers, and 'ordinary' Canadians of the time.

Several themes have emerged from this exploration.

The first of these themes was revealed by examining the development of the legislative, regulatory, and administrative framework through which the immigration program was conducted. Successive post-Confederation governments crafted a regulatory system which delegated broad discretionary powers to ministers and senior civil servants. Within that system – often admired by scholars for its 'flexibility' – policy-makers generally functioned unencumbered by legal, Parliamentary, or public oversight. Changes to policy were implemented by regulation or cabinet order, and could subsequently be reversed or revised quickly, without the need for debate or statutory amendment. Postwar governments inherited this established infrastructure, and there is little evidence that they contemplated significant change as they proceeded to administer immigration policy in the postwar environment. Mackenzie King, for example, may have recognized that many immigrants would be needed to sustain economic growth and prosperity, but his chief concern was to reassure Canadians that no "fundamental alteration" to the nation's demographic character would ensue.¹

Change, however, did come, and an examination of the nature and causes of change in postwar immigration policy has been a second theme of this work. Initially, there were the pressures of international responsibility. In particular, the obligation to help resolve the postwar chaos in Europe led to initiatives to admit immigrant groups identified as refugees and "displaced persons." Other policy changes followed during the St. Laurent years, particularly after the creation of a Department of

¹ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2646.

Citizenship and Immigration in 1950, and many of those were implemented despite entrenched resistance from within the immigration bureaucracy. Under the Department's first minister, Walter Harris, there was a renewed effort to increase immigration levels and streamline admission procedures. These measures still focused primarily on countries that were traditionally 'preferred' as immigrant sources, but immigration from Germany and Italy (recent wartime enemy states) also began to increase. A new "Assisted Passage" loan program was implemented, and agreements were negotiated for small yearly quotas from India, Pakistan, and Ceylon. Passage of the 1953 *Immigration Act* modernized the legislation (to some extent), and revised several admission criteria on humanitarian grounds, even though other traditional, exclusionary criteria were retained.

The Department's second minister, Jack Pickersgill, pursued bolder initiatives than Harris, but the circumstances of his tenure both allowed and required him to do so. The economy had expanded consistently in the decade since 1945, and with it the nation's capacity, and requirement, for immigrants. This development also furnished the government with an economic argument for increased immigration levels. When traditionally 'preferred' sources for immigrants became unreliable in the mid-1950s, Pickersgill began to look elsewhere. He eased admission restrictions on other groups – from Palestine, Greece, the Ukraine, and the Caribbean – despite the objections of his officials and his own predisposition toward a "conservative" immigration policy. Each of these initiatives brought only incremental change initially, but it is improbable that those who undertook them failed to appreciate their longer-term implications. In 1956, Pickersgill led an initiative of much greater magnitude, as he astutely recognized that the Hungarian Revolution presented Canada with an opportunity not to be missed.

A combination of economic and political concerns seemed to impede the Diefenbaker government from making good on many of its initial immigration promises. In their reticence, however, the Conservatives did not differ greatly from their predecessors; concerns about the economy, public opinion, and politics, were never far from the minds of all postwar policy-makers. Near the end of its mandate, the Diefenbaker government overcame these concerns, at least in part, proclaiming important regulatory amendments to admission criteria in 1962.

Whenever possible, postwar governments – particularly those of Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent – preferred to implement changes to immigration policy without exposing them to public attention. King's May, 1947 Parliamentary speech, for example, revealed few details of the unprecedented "Displaced Persons" initiative that would be undertaken only days later. As we have also seen, adjustments to selection criteria, admission procedures, or other administrative directions to officers and staff were invariably communicated via internal directives or memoranda, materials that were not available to the public or the press. A casual reader would almost certainly have been surprised by a 1957

departmental memorandum which summarized the range of services and financial support programs for newcomers that had been implemented during the postwar period. The extensive list included an emergency hospitalization, medical, and dental program, emergency transportation assistance, emergency food and shelter, and a family assistance program to provide monthly allowances to parents equivalent to the federal Family Allowance program (for which immigrants did not qualify during their first year in Canada). A series of “Medical Welfare Agreements” with six provinces and the Northwest Territory provided additional coverage for services provided under provincial healthcare programs.² Expenditures relating to these programs would have been itemized in the annual estimates of the Department and therefore subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, but their implementation seemed to pass unnoticed.

While international pressures and domestic economic conditions propelled many postwar policy changes, it is important to note that there were also impediments. Some barriers to change were bureaucratic in nature, and an examination of those barriers formed a third theme of this thesis. As we have seen, the post-1945 agendas of several federal departments presented differing priorities and goals related to immigration. The Department of External Affairs sought to ensure that Canada responded favourably to the international pressures concerning refugees, and its officials were frustrated by Immigration Branch reticence in that area. Relations between the departments of Labour and Mines and Resources (which still housed the Immigration Branch), functioned harmoniously as the war ended, but soon deteriorated under jurisdictional disputes and competing priorities.

As deputy labour minister Arthur MacNamara explained to his counterpart Hugh Keenleyside in 1947, his department’s priority was “immigration controlled by certainty that employment will be available for those brought into the country who will be seeking work.”³ Labour officials thus developed a definite conception of their department’s role in the postwar immigration process, which they described to the Senate standing committee in 1949:

The responsibility for the placement in employment of all immigrants becomes the responsibility of the Labour Department. In the case of displaced persons, they are specially selected by representatives of the Department in Europe to fill applications filed by employers under the group movement plan.⁴

² LAC J.W. Pickersgill Records MG32 B34, Vol. 102 *Citizenship and Immigration 1957-1958*, “Canadian Immigration: An outline of developments in the postwar period. Reference Paper No. 1, Department of Citizenship and Immigration (November 1957)”, 15-6.

³ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG 26 Vol. 101, File 3-18-3, *Immigration-Labour Committee – General File*, MacNamara to Keenleyside, March 19, 1947.

⁴ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG 26 Vol. 101, File 3-18-2, vol. 1, *The Senate – Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour*, “Memorandum For Senate Committee – March 22nd, 1949.”

Initially, Labour's important role in the selection process enjoyed the support of Mines and Resources. A March, 1947 cabinet memo requested the establishment of a joint committee of the two departments, to ensure the ongoing availability of Labour's expertise: "It is believed that the Department of Labour can undertake this work through its placement service more economically than would be the case if the Immigration Branch ... were to organize a service of its own."⁵

The interdepartmental "Labour-Immigration Committee" was duly established, but within weeks was beset by conflict. On May 3, 1947 an impatient Keenleyside scolded his immigration director Arthur Joliffe that the committee's first three meetings had not resulted in "the admission of a single new immigrant to Canada." Now that the prime minister had announced the government's strategy for increased postwar immigration, it was essential that the committee "gets on with its work in a much more expeditious manner."⁶ Instead of resolving their differences, however, relations between the two departments spiraled downward. It had come as a "shock," MacNamara complained, to learn of Joliffe's belief that Labour "was encroaching on his responsibilities." Joliffe now seemed to be arguing that "the Immigration Branch is quite competent to look after selection and placement and that all that he would require from Labour was an expression of opinion as to the need in Canada." This, MacNamara declared, was unacceptable: "The Labour Department is not prepared, and on this point the Minister [i.e. labour minister Humphrey Mitchell] is most emphatic, to second its officers to any other Department and place them under the absolute authority of some other government agency."⁷

Keenleyside attempted to repair the rupture which the developing turf war had caused. He pleaded for good-will on the part of both departments, and a clearer "demarkation [sic] of responsibilities." Less diplomatically, he summarized the problem as "disorganization of the whole field," and a tendency of "certain officials" from Labour to "act independently of immigration authorities" whom the government had intended to be in control of the selection process. There was a role for Labour in the process, Keenleyside acknowledged, but it was a subordinate one whereby Labour's officers "must function under the control of Immigration." Settlement work in particular was a separate matter from the movement of displaced persons arriving under bulk labour arrangements, and must remain within the purview of the "Immigration Settlement Service."⁸

⁵ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG 26 Vol. 101, File 3-18-3, *Immigration-Labour Committee – General File*, "Memorandum to Cabinet, March 1947."

⁶ *Ibid.*, Keenleyside to Joliffe, May 3, 1947.

⁷ *Ibid.*, MacNamara to Keenleyside, October 23, 1947.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Keenleyside to MacNamara, October 24, 1947.

By 1948, the Immigration Branch and the Department of Labour were fighting openly over who should have primary responsibility for overseas recruitment, and the reporting relationship between them. An External Affairs memorandum summarized the untenable situation:

The tug o' war between Immigration and Labour is developing every day and there must soon, I think, be a show-down.... Are we not [in] a position in which we shall have to insist upon a more accurate definition of the relation which the position of Canadian Government officials, from whatever Department they may come, bears to the Chief of Mission when they are serving in his territory?⁹

With stronger, less petulant leadership, the two departments might have resolved their differences. Hugh Keenleyside, however, retreated to the diplomatic service in 1949 after only a short period as deputy minister, leaving others to continue the squabble. Mines and Resources minister J. A. Glen recognized the problem as one of differing, but equally important, departmental priorities. Labour's role, he acknowledged, was to supply the demand for workers, whereas "my Department is charged with carrying out the declared immigration policy of the government which is to very materially increase the movement of immigrants to Canada." Solutions, however, evaded Glen, who concluded: "I can see no reason why the various functions of the two departments should conflict."¹⁰ After the formation of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1950, Laval Fortier quickly summarized for its new minister Walter Harris all of Labour's transgressions and the longstanding irritants between the departments. There should be "close cooperation between the Immigration Branch and the Department of Labour," Fortier wrote, with "Labour Department officers attached to the Immigration Organization." But it was essential that such arrangements "must function under the control of Immigration."¹¹ As we have seen, it was Harris, after his appointment as minister, who finally established his department's lead responsibility in immigration matters with his cabinet colleagues.¹²

Within the Immigration Branch, the primary impediment to change was not conflict but inertia. Beginning with Frederick Blair in the 1920s, management of the immigration bureaucracy remained for decades the preserve of a very small group – Blair, Arthur Joliffe, Charles Smith, and later, Laval Fortier. The influence of the notoriously racist Blair may have diminished by the time of Fortier's appointment in 1950, but it had cast a long shadow over immigration policy and over Blair's successors who, in

⁹ LAC Privy Council Office Records RG 2 Vol. 166, *File I-50-5*, "Confidential Memorandum to the Acting Under-Secretary," October 7, 1948.

¹⁰ LAC Privy Council Office Records RG 2 Vol. 166, *File I-50-7*, Glen to Mitchell, February 9, 1948.

¹¹ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG 26, Vol. 101, *File 3-18-3, Immigration-Labour Committee – General File*, "Re – Immigration-Labour Relations," February 2, 1950.

¹² See above, Chapter , [pp. xx-yy.]

Keenleyside's description, had been "trained in the bad school of Blair."¹³ The combination of intransigent leadership and unwavering commitment to restrictive admission practices virtually assured that the Immigration Branch would generate few new ideas or innovative policy options.

Outside the bureaucracy, other institutions that might have been expected to demand change, seldom did. Opposition politicians, as we have seen, rarely expressed disapproval of discriminatory practices or preferential rules. Within the press, postwar reporting on immigration issues often focused on opposition arguments more opportunistic than substantive. There were, of course, exceptions, but few journalists advocated for change in ways that might have been expected of them, or might have substantially influenced policy.¹⁴ On the subject of immigration, the Canadian media did not show itself to be a beacon of tolerance, inclusion, or change.

A fourth theme of this study, and one never far from the forefront, has been the influence of race and racism on policy. As in earlier periods, it is beyond dispute that racial preference and prejudice remained significant components of postwar immigration policy. It was evident in administrative selection practices, and in the preferential and exclusionary language of the legislation and regulations. The archived records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration contain a file entitled "Habits and Characteristics General File." Among its contents are a 1954 memorandum from the Department's "Research Division" to the Citizenship Branch director, entitled "Body Odour as a Racial Characteristic." The document summarizes in detail the results of a recent "scientific" study examining the apparently common notion that "certain groups of people can be identified by a typical body odour and that this odour is a racial or biologically inherited characteristic." Noting that "Negroes and Jews are most often cited in support of this view," the writer explains that tests had been conducted by taking perspiration samples from Black and White subjects, and giving them to Whites to smell. In the end, the researcher conceded, the "majority of subjects were unable to tell," but that result did not influence his advice on the matter: "While the experiment does not disprove the argument that there are "racial" differences in body odour, it raises some doubts concerning the possibility that such differences can be accurately

¹³ QUA Grant Dexter Papers, Series I – Correspondence 1930-1961, Vol. 4, File 30, *Correspondence – General 1947 Jan. – June*, "Ottawa memo – Max Freedman, Thursday, April 2, 1947," 4.

¹⁴ One such exception was Pierre Berton's 1948 *Maclean's* article "No Jews Need Apply" which exposed systemic discrimination toward Jews and other minority groups in Ontario. Another young journalist, Peter C. Newman, had also begun to explore immigration issues. In one 1952 article, Newman asked rhetorically: "Are We Doing Enough to Help Our Immigrants?" Others with genuine concern for immigration issues were *Saturday Night* editor B.K. Sandwell, and Michael Barkway, who in 1957 identified a variety of increasingly complex economic and social challenges which immigration policy needed to address. See Barkway, "A Turning Point for Immigration?"

perceived.”¹⁵ The branch director dutifully forwarded the memorandum to the deputy minister, for his information.¹⁶

That such odious nonsense could be seriously considered, and retained in the department’s files, affirms the continuing influence of racism on postwar immigration policy. The foregoing chapters, however, have also described numerous policy changes, beginning as early as 1947, which removed preferences and reduced or eliminated exclusionary, race-based criteria, culminating with the 1962 regulatory amendments. It is therefore reasonable to return to the questions concerning race that were posed in the introduction to this thesis: Were those responsible for postwar immigration policy universally and uniformly racist, or were any motivated by ideals more progressive and humane than scholars have generally acknowledged? Can it be said that any endeavoured to lead or shape public opinions about immigration and race, rather than simply follow them?

Senior immigration bureaucrats consistently advocated the continuation of preferential, exclusionary, and racist, admission criteria. Experience had convinced them that political problems were more easily avoided by exclusion rather than admission. Not all decisions were motivated by racism, however, and the actions of several postwar immigration ministers suggested more progressive world views than have previously been recognized. This was particularly evident with the two St. Laurent-era ministers.

Undeniably both Walter Harris and Jack Pickersgill subscribed to many of the views about race that were prevalent in their time. Harris in particular showed little concern for traditionally non-preferred ethnic groups, and toward some – especially the Black community – his actions were, at times, egregious. They were not, however, uniformly regressive. Harris was wounded by a German sniper in 1944, but it was he who removed the ‘enemy alien’ restriction on immigration from Germany in 1950. When confronted by opposition criticism of that decision, Harris replied that “service in the German army by a German national should not be held against him. That is his duty in time of war.”¹⁷ It was a remarkably broad-minded response.

In an earlier parliamentary speech, given years before his appointment to cabinet, Harris spoke eloquently about Canada’s immigration history and “the great numbers ...who will undoubtedly want to come to this country when the war is over.” As in previous times, he acknowledged, there would be concern that newcomers might not assimilate. But the current war had provided “the test” of such

¹⁵ LAC Department of Citizenship and Immigration Records RG 26, Vol. 75, *File 1-1-7, Subject: Habits and Characteristics General File, “Body Odour as a Racial Characteristic”*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Dr. F.E. Jones, Chief, Research Division to E. Bussiere, Director, December 15, 1954.

¹⁷ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1953:4: VI: 6827.

concerns. Many immigrants from Europe and their descendants, Harris noted, were now in uniform, and in numbers as great “as the percentage of those who came from the British Isles.” For that reason, he concluded, “I do not think we need to fear the coming to this country after the war of the people of various races.”¹⁸

These do not seem to be the thoughts of an unregenerate racist.

Jack Pickersgill’s personal views on immigration were – if anything – less progressive than those of his predecessor. Pickersgill authored the government’s 1947 policy statement on immigration, and the principles it set out were as much his own as Mackenzie King’s. Throughout his life, Pickersgill held fast to the opinion that immigration to Canada was, foremost, “a matter of domestic policy” – a “privilege” rather than a “right.” And yet, despite his admittedly “conservative” point of view, Pickersgill made more changes to admission criteria than any other postwar minister. Both Harris and Pickersgill had seen something of the world – Pickersgill during his student days and his travels with prime ministers; and Harris through military service. Both understood that negative public opinion regarding ‘others’ could be overcome, and so the process of transforming the race-based components of immigration policy – removing barriers based on race, and replacing them with occupational or educational criteria – began during their ministerial tenures. It is therefore inaccurate to conclude (as some scholars have done) that the “point of departure” for this process of change occurred at some “indefinable moment, buried deep in the Diefenbaker era.”¹⁹

One question remains concerning immigration policies of the postwar King, St. Laurent, and Diefenbaker governments: Was there a deliberate plan to manage postwar immigration, or does the history of this topic simply offer an example of public policy as – in Charles Lindblom’s classic phrase – the “science of muddling through”? Mackenzie King’s 1947 immigration statement revealed his government’s intention to promote increased immigration. If not a detailed plan, the speech did disclose a general strategy to be pursued, seeking to meet Canada’s requirement for immigrants through careful selection. Subsequent governments – including Diefenbaker’s – professed allegiance to the principles set out by King, even as they moved beyond King’s pledge that immigration would not result in “fundamental alteration in the character of our population.”²⁰

Diefenbaker’s 1957 election campaign presented a plan for extensive reform of immigration legislation and policy, but ultimately his government delivered less than their Liberal predecessors. The

¹⁸ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1943: I, 15. (Harris, temporarily on leave from overseas military service, had been chosen to speak in the debate on the Throne speech opening the 1943 session.)

¹⁹ Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 337.

²⁰ Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1947: III, 2646.

records of Diefenbaker's immigration ministers as agents of change were indifferent at best. During his year as acting minister, Davie Fulton made no move to implement the "vast and humane" changes promised during the 1957 campaign, and in fact reduced immigration levels immediately upon taking office. Fulton's priorities remained, as always, fixated on the preservation of Canada's British heritage.

Ellen Fairclough held the immigration portfolio longest during the Diefenbaker period but achieved mixed results. The attempt to curtail Italian immigration revealed a profound insensitivity to ethnicity. Yet, as we have seen, Fairclough advocated continuously within cabinet for clearer policy direction on immigration. The 1962 regulatory amendments were an important development, albeit one better understood as the continuation of a process that had been initiated earlier, and administratively, by previous governments. Fairclough's successor, R. A. Bell, did not hold the immigration portfolio long enough to make any significant impact on policy.

Only after the defeat of the Diefenbaker government would the postwar momentum that was lost after 1957 be recaptured. The Departments of Labour and Citizenship, and Immigration, were amalgamated (as Manpower and Immigration) in 1965, at last resolving the longstanding friction between the two entities. In 1967, new regulatory provisions implemented a system of "assessment points" to be applied in determining admission eligibility. This new points system created a more objective assessment process, reducing the discretionary powers long held by immigration branch staff.²¹ With these measures, "discrimination on the basis of race or nationality was eliminated for all classes of immigrants."²²

Modern public-policy scholarship has sought to understand the "dynamics of policy stability and change over time" by identifying the "drivers" – events, ideas, and influences – that lead to policy change.²³ These often include unforeseen events or emergencies, routine political developments such as change in government, or evolving public perceptions and changing societal norms. In postwar Canada, the key "drivers" of change to immigration policy included international responsibilities and pressures upon the government, bureaucratic inertia and intransigence, entrenched racial biases, and – above all – political concerns.

Policy change is a dynamic process, but as one scholar has noted, in many instances "current policy is the result of a long, evolutionary process."²⁴ So it was in postwar Canada, where changes to immigration policy were implemented gradually and incrementally, between 1945 and 1963. The first

²¹ Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy*, 40-1.

²² *The Immigration Program: A report of the Canadian immigration and population study*, 33.

²³ Henstra, "The Dynamic of Policy Change," 399-403. The author's explanation of policy drivers is helpful in understanding influences that both propel and impede change.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 400.

steps were King's May 1947 statement on immigration policy, the repeal of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, and the Displaced Persons initiative following the war. The two St. Laurent-era immigration ministers continued the process with a series of successive revisions to admission criteria. The evidence reveals a perceptible acceleration of this transformation process under J. W. Pickersgill, beginning around 1955. The process of transformation which was undertaken hesitantly and reluctantly after the war, had become noticeably more progressive between 1955 and 1957, through the removal of various preferential criteria. The Diefenbaker government's regulatory revisions in 1962 marked the final transformational step during this period.

It is noteworthy that the postwar administrations of Mackenzie King, Louis St. Laurent, and John Diefenbaker all contemplated a major immigration initiative at some point during their mandate. In each instance, however, the proposal to substantially increase immigration levels was abandoned in favour of less dramatic policy revisions, or even temporary reductions. Canada's long and unsettled immigration history had taught that political dangers were more likely to be avoided by proceeding slowly, avoiding public scrutiny, and implementing change incrementally.

History had also demonstrated the importance of 'flexibility' in this policy area, to permit quick reaction to unforeseen events, to respond quickly to economic requirements, and to meet the relentless demands of politics. With an established and 'flexible' regulatory framework in place, Canada's postwar governments set out to deal with immigration and administer policy as best they could, just as earlier governments had done. And, as always, they strove to manage the perennial "problem" of immigration "with the least possible fuss and publicity."

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